

Spring 5-2012

## **Is There a Correlation Between Teacher Efficacy and Effectiveness to Re-Engage At-Risk Students and Graduate On Time?**

John Daniel Guillory  
*University of Southern Mississippi*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), and the [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Guillory, John Daniel, "Is There a Correlation Between Teacher Efficacy and Effectiveness to Re-Engage At-Risk Students and Graduate On Time?" (2012). *Dissertations*. 791.  
<https://aquila.usm.edu/dissertations/791>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact [Joshua.Cromwell@usm.edu](mailto:Joshua.Cromwell@usm.edu).

The University of Southern Mississippi

IS THERE A CORRELATION BETWEEN TEACHER EFFICACY  
AND EFFECTIVENESS TO RE-ENGAGE AT-RISK  
STUDENTS AND GRADUATE ON TIME?

by

John Daniel Guillory

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduated School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2012

## ABSTRACT

# IS THERE A CORRELATION BETWEEN TEACHER EFFICACY AND EFFECTIVENESS TO RE-ENGAGE AT-RISK STUDENTS AND GRADUATE ON TIME?

by John Daniel Guillory

May 2012

Teachers are in the perfect position to be an influential source of help to students with life and academic circumstances that inhibit them from staying on the path to graduation, but they often underestimate their role in helping students develop the resilience to do so. Re-engaging students in the learning process who are severely off the graduation path may threaten the teacher's efficacy. Once school personnel have identified students with at-risk indicators this questions still exists: Are teachers ready to intervene in ways that will help students re-engage in school and become resilient so that they graduate on time?

The study examined the impact of teacher efficacy beliefs on teacher perceptions of effectiveness in helping students at-risk of graduating on time. One hundred and forty-four teachers of grade 4, grade 7, and grade 9 who taught English Language Arts and/or math from one large school system in south Louisiana participated. The findings show that teachers responded in a highly efficacious manner but efficacy by grade level and subject area did not statistically differ. Teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage academically did not differ significantly by grade level and subject area but did so for helping students re-engage behaviorally.

In addition, teacher perceptions in assisting students with behavioral deficiencies was significant and positively correlated with teacher efficacy for grade 4 math and ELA teachers as well as grade 7 math teachers. Significant correlations were found for teacher perceptions in assisting students with academic deficiencies and the Student Engagement subscale of teacher efficacy for grade 4 math and ELA teachers, grade 9 ELA teachers as well as grade 9 math teachers.

Given the variety of at-risk indicators that young children present in early grades, the results of this study offer insight into the practices that school leaders may establish in order to develop a comprehensive dropout reduction plan. This plan would focus on early identification, prevention and intervention strategies, as well as professional development to increase the efficacy of teachers working with at-risk students.

COPYRIGHT BY  
JOHN DANIEL GUILLORY  
2012

The University of Southern Mississippi  
IS THERE A CORRELATION BETWEEN TEACHER EFFICACY  
AND EFFECTIVENESS TO RE-ENGAGE AT-RISK  
STUDENTS AND GRADUATE ON TIME?

by

John Daniel Guillory

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduated School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved:

Ronald A. Styron  
Director

James T. Johnson

David E. Lee

Rose M. McNeese

Susan A. Siltanen  
Dean of the Graduate School

May 2012

## DEDICATION

My earliest experiences of self-efficacy stem from my relationship with my parents. In spite of poverty, dropping out of high school, and other kinds of personal afflictions, they both managed to teach me that I can be, do, and have anything I want in my life provided I graduate from high school and never give up! I would like dedicate this effort to them, Paul and Dora Guillory, who have since recently passed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writing of this dissertation not only represents the scholarly journey my life has taken, but also the influence that many people have had on my life, both personally and professionally. I want to begin by thanking Dr. Ron Styron. Not only was he extremely meticulous as my committee chair throughout this process, but he is the inspiration for me entering the role of high school administration many years back. In his calm, unassuming manner he managed to get me involved as a teacher leader when he became my principal. He illustrated to me that through the use of research, implementation of standards and best practices, and shared leadership, schools can experience continuous improvement...and should. He has been a huge source of inspiration for me excelling not only in my role as a school administrator, but also in returning to school years later to pursue my doctoral goals. I appreciate his ability to encourage me to stretch myself to experience new possibilities. In addition to Dr. Styron, I want to thank the rest of my committee members Dr. James Johnson, Dr. Rose McNeese, and Dr. David Lee. Each one has been a tremendous source of wisdom, encouragement, and humor both as professors in the classroom and throughout this whole endeavor.

Next I want to thank my good buddy, spiritual friend, and long time education colleague Dr. Hilly Bernard. Beginning with my first years as a teacher, he helped me to improve my teacher efficacy through the Cognitive Coaching process. Not only did the depths of my understanding of teaching and learning increase, but his impact was felt throughout my entire tenure as principal. Difficult times were made better and innovative



ideas were realized because of his deep insights into life and his friendship. He is truly my dear friend and soul buddy.

I have many long time friends for whom I am thankful to have in my life. But I would like to thank my newest group of friends who have been on this pursuit as well. In particular I appreciate Michael Weaver for his weekly commitment to library meetings and his sense of humor that made this process more enjoyable.

In closing, I want to thank an extremely important person to me in my life, Tracy Cox. She continues to be a source of inspiration for me, my closest confident, and just an awesome person to experience life's highs and lows. I thank her for being in my corner throughout this process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....ii

DEDICATION.....iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....v

LIST OF TABLES.....ix

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION.....1

    Statement of the Problem

    Purpose of the Study

    Research Questions

    Definitions of Terms

    Delimitations

    Assumptions

    Justification

    Summary

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....17

    Efficacy as a Theoretical Framework

    Teacher Efficacy

    Meeting the Academic and Behavioral Needs of Challenging Students

    The Dropout Challenge

    Counting the Graduate

    Who Drops Out?

    Typology of the Dropout

    Engagement Matters

    Disengagement

    Predicting Those Who Drop Out

    Dropout Prevention and Intervention

    Creating Engaging Schools

    Early Detection-Data Collection

    Changes to Accountability

    Conclusion

III. METHODOLOGY.....101

    Research Design

    Participants

	Instrumentation	
	Procedures	
	Data Analysis	
	Summary	
IV.	RESULTS.....	115
	Demographic Data	
	Descriptive Statistics	
	Statistical Tests	
	Ancillary Findings	
	Summary	
V.	DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH.....	133
	Conclusions and Discussion	
	Recommendations for Policy and Practice	
	Limitations	
	Recommendations for Future Research	
	Summary	
	APPENDIXES .....	152
	REFERENCES .....	165

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

1.	Reliability Statistics for Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Short Form and Subscales.....	106
2.	Reliability Statistics for Teachers' Sense of Effectiveness for Re-engaging Students.....	109
3.	Frequencies for Teacher Characteristics of Teachers Participating in the Study.....	117
4.	Frequencies for Classroom Setting.....	118
5.	Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Short Form Subscales (N=144).....	120
6.	Descriptive Statistics for Re-engaging Students Subscales (N=144).....	122
7.	Descriptive Statistics for Student Engagement and Teaching Assignment.....	124
8.	Descriptive Statistics for Instructional Strategies and Teaching Assignment....	125
9.	Descriptive Statistics for Classroom Management and Teaching Assignment.....	126
10.	Descriptive Statistics for Re-engaging Students and Teaching Assignment.....	127
11.	Correlations Statistics of Subscales of Teacher Efficacy and Re-engaging Behavior by Teaching Assignment.....	129
12.	Correlations Statistics of Subscales of Teacher Efficacy and Re-engaging Academics by Teaching Assignment.....	131

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

According to the January 2007 Issue Brief for The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, a heated debate regarding school accountability and the perspective of responsibility resulted in a lawsuit in Florida. The perspective of accountability centered on these two questions: “Should schools take responsibility for providing all students with certain kinds of ‘inputs’—such as curriculum, instruction, and materials, or should they take responsibility for measurable student ‘outcomes’—such as assessment results and graduation rates?” (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2007, p. 1). In order for a high school student to graduate on time, he or she must persist through schooling, be engaged in schooling, and experience academic success along the way. Holding high schools responsible for students graduating in four years or less requires teachers to attend to much more than the content they have been trained to teach.

The term at-risk is used often when describing the student who is likely to drop out. Hixson 1993 offers a different perspective when describing the at-risk experience that focuses efforts on “enhancing institutional and professional capacity and responsiveness” (para. 9). His description of this occurrence is as follows:

Students are placed “at risk” when they experience a significant mismatch between their circumstances and needs, and the capacity or willingness of the school to accept, accommodate, and respond to them in a manner that supports and enables their maximum social, emotional, and intellectual growth and development. (para. 7)

When student engagement is low, as evidenced by the student's behavioral and academic experiences, teachers must intervene in a way that helps the student re-engage in the learning process. When working with students at risk of dropping out, it is important that teachers develop a common understanding of what student engagement is and its relationship to student progress towards graduation. Understanding the dropout crisis in terms of disengagement, identifying students who are disengaged, developing relationships with students that promote resiliency, and implementing strategies to re-engage students in school is our best chance of helping students graduate on time.

It will take a collaborative effort and shared leadership to meet the challenges that teachers and administrators are expected to meet in order to serve students who throughout their educational career have struggled to find success (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Leaders must realize that “effective change requires that people sacrifice time and energy—and pre-existing beliefs” (Reeves, 2011b, p. 40). Expecting all students to persist through school and graduate on time is not only the challenge of the high school faculty but also of every teacher that each student has ever experienced. The one variable that may affect all students at risk of graduating on time is the teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness in helping students re-engage in schooling and persist along a path that keeps him or her on track to graduate.

#### Statement of the Problem

Historically, part of the problem in understanding the seriousness of dropout rates has stemmed from the various methods in which states collect data and how the student graduate and the student dropout are defined. According to Barton (2005), for some states and school districts, students are classified as dropouts if they leave school during

grades 10 through 12; other systems include grade 9. A student is considered a dropout in some systems as soon as the student is absent for 15 days. In other systems, students are not considered dropouts until they miss 45 days of excused absences. In some cases, students who receive special education services are not counted in the dropout rate calculations (Barton, 2005).

Another example that masks the graduation statistics is that the Census Bureau statistics on high school graduation include the number of General Education Development (GED) Certificates awarded. These certificates are not awarded because a student has completed a required high school curriculum, but rather is based on passing what is known as the GED test. Administered by the American Council on Education, the GED certificate is meant to be the educational equivalent of a high school diploma (Barton, 2005).

In October of 2008, the U.S. Department of Education issued regulations requiring states to report a “uniform, comparable, and accurate graduation rate” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009a, p. 1). The *four-year adjusted cohort rate* would measure the percent of students from a ninth grade cohort who graduated with a regular diploma within four years of schooling. In addition to academic indicators, this cohort rate will be used as part of the SY 2011-12 accountability methods in determining whether a high school is meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009a). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the “averaged freshman graduation rate” indicates the rate in which students of public high schools are graduating within a four year period. For Louisiana, this rate was 59.5% for the 2005 school year (Cataldi, Laird, & KewalRamani, 2009).

Students who dropped out of school often “expressed great remorse for having left high school and expressed strong interest in re-entering school with students their age” (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006, p. 10). In addition, 81% of the adult dropouts surveyed believed that graduating from high school was important to success in life. At least 74% said they would have stayed in school or would re-enroll in a high school for people their age if they could (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). The nearly 14,000 Louisiana students who drop out annually make up a large portion of the shortage of skilled laborers and will earn nearly \$10,000 annually less than the student with a high school diploma (LPB Louisiana Public Square, 2009).

The National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) is an organization whose mission is to “improve school engagement to ensure school success for at-risk youth and their families” (para. 1). NCSE defines school engagement as “students and families being actively involved in learning at school” (para. 2) and is grounded in what is referred to as the three A’s: attendance, attachment, and achievement (NCSE, 2010). Before students drop out of school they tend to disengage from school by decreasing commitment to one or more of these three areas. Dropping out of high school is a long process of disengagement that begins well before the student and parent sign the drop papers at a given high school (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). Therefore, engagement provides a way for understanding and intervening when students show signs of disconnecting from school (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006). Over the short term, global (affective, behavioral, and cognitive) student disengagement is associated with dropping out of school. Of the three, behavioral engagement, measured by school attendance and discipline records, is the best predictor



of dropping out. However, behavioral disengagement is likely a consequence of affective and cognitive disengagement (Archambault, Janosz, Fallu, & Pagani, 2009).

Using adolescents' responses to the Social Inventory Questionnaire from two disparate longitudinal samples, Janosz, Le Blanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (2000) empirically developed a typology of school dropouts based on characteristics of academic and behavioral school experiences. Dropouts were first classified based on their level of school misbehavior using the categories high versus average-low. Those dropouts, who had not exhibited problem behavior, were classified according to their levels of commitment to school and their achievement score. The typology was framed around three school factors: behavioral maladjustments, commitment, and achievement. Four dropout types were considered based upon the interactions of these school factors: (a) The Quiet Dropout, (b) The Disengaged Dropout, (c) The Low-Achiever Dropout, and (d) The Maladjusted Dropout. Two groups, the Quiet Dropout and the Maladjusted, accounted for 76% to 85% of the dropout population (Janosz, Le Blanc, Boulerice, & Tremblay 2000).

According to Janosz, Archambault, Morizot, and Pagani (2008) the *quiet* dropout constituted those students who had previously reported high levels of school motivation. On the other hand, the *maladjusted* dropout had experienced extreme levels of school-related and psychosocial problems. The *disengaged* dropout accounted for roughly 10% of those students who had average grades and were unmotivated by school but were not showing any socio-emotional difficulties. The *low-achiever* dropout, accounting for roughly 10% of those who dropped out, were those students experiencing course failure

and were unmotivated by the school experience, but did not demonstrate externalizing behavior problems (Janosz, Archambault, Morizot, & Pagani, 2008).

In a study by Silver, Saunders, and Zarate (2008), which focused on the critical transitions between middle school and high school and between ninth grade and high school graduation, the researchers analyzed a seven-year longitudinal dataset from the Los Angeles Unified School District. Among many of the characteristics examined, it was noted that that the likelihood of dropping out of school was greatest for ninth graders and that pre-existing academic disengagement intensified the transition. Specifically, it was determined that each successive school failure at the middle school level had a negative impact on graduation rates and that “the chance of graduating dropped to less than half for students who were absent more than 10 days/year in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade or in high school” (p. 22).

Early identification of students who are at risk of dropping out is important as illustrated in a recent study of nine predictive variables pertaining to approximately 13,000 sixth graders in the Philadelphia School System. Balfanz, Herzog, and Mac Iver (2007) were able to accurately predict as early as sixth grade and with 60% accuracy those students who eventually dropped from high school using four readily available high yield indicators: poor attendance, poor final behavior marks, and/or failing math or English (p. 230). The first step in linking research-based strategies to help students at risk of dropping out involves utilizing data systems that identify individual students and analyzing basic data on which students are showing early warning signs of dropping out. These warning signs include student absences, grade retention, and low academic

achievement (Dynarski, et al., 2008; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007). The advantages of an early warning system include but are not limited to:

1. Routinely used data are housed at the school and are highly predictive of the student dropout.
2. Course performance is a better predictor of an on track indicator towards graduation than are demographic characteristics or previous achievement test scores.
3. Data for targeted interventions are available early and throughout the school year, such as first month, first quarter, and first semester.
4. School and district personnel have the ability to identify school climate issues that contribute to dropout rates and/or concerns pertaining to subgroups of students (Pinkus, 2008, p. 3).

The systematic collection and use of accurate data that illustrates the dropout problem in a school community will help all stakeholders identify those students who are at risk and explain why students choose to leave school. Developing school, district, and statewide early warning systems will lead to the selection of programs and strategies that are most effective in increasing graduation rates (Baker Evaluation, Research, & Consulting, Inc., n.d.; Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Balfanz, 2009).

Students who persist and complete high school in spite of the indicators that put them at risk have developed internal resiliency skills. Resiliency is a “set of self-protective characteristics possessed or experienced by those who are able to adapt to hardship and succeed” (Hupfeld, p. 3). Because of the daily interaction, teachers are in the perfect position to be an influential source of assistance to students with stressful life

circumstances. Schools that provide external protective factors are those where (a) the adults are positive role models and mentors for students; (b) environments are success-oriented, caring, attentive, and stable; and (c) achievements are recognized from a variety of areas of student life. Assuming that teacher efficacy beliefs influence the progression of students' resilience, Oswald, Johnson, and Howard (2003) surveyed teachers and asked them to identify the degree to which they believed certain protective factors influenced resilience and the strategies they used to cultivate it. The protective factors that influence resilience development included the family, schools, community, peers, and the student's predisposition towards handling challenging life circumstances (Oswald, Johnson, & Howard, 2003).

Being an effective communicator, having a strong relationship with at least one adult, believing in one's ability to achieve, and accepting responsibility were the qualities identified by teachers that enhance resilience in students. The individual and family factors ranked as high influences on resiliency development, but teachers viewed community factors as limited influences. The results from this study indicated that teachers are apt to underestimate their role either as a supportive individual or within a caring school environment in providing protective factors for increasing a student's resilience. Influencing resilience was thought to be the result of student effort, instead of the result of influential relationships with role models within the school (Oswald et al., 2003).

Once school personnel have identified students with at-risk indicators this questions still exists: Are teachers ready to intervene in ways that will help students re-engage in school and become resilient so that they graduate on time? The teachers'

perceived sense of competency in positively impacting students' behavior and academic outcomes is a characteristic that may be related to teachers' abilities to effectively intervene with students' academic and behavioral problems. Bandura described perceived self-efficacy as concerning oneself with "judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (1982, p. 122). Bandura (1997) identified teacher efficacy as a type of self-efficacy that is an outcome of a cognitive process and suggested that teachers are more apt to successfully conduct tasks in which they believe themselves to be competent.

Gibson and Dembo (1984) propose two dimensions of teacher efficacy: personal efficacy and general efficacy. Personal teaching efficacy is the teacher's belief about his or her own knowledge, skills, and ability to produce a change in student outcomes. General teaching efficacy is the teacher's belief that teachers in general can influence student outcomes in light of external difficult circumstances. Additionally, Gibson and Dembo suggested that teachers tend to persevere through demanding situations when they believe in their ability to make a difference. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) established that teachers with high efficacy beliefs tend to cause stronger student achievement than teachers with lower teacher efficacy.

According to Bandura (1993), students' beliefs in their capabilities to master academic subjects predict their academic accomplishments. A student's level of academic anxiety has little or no relationship to the individual's academic performances. Academic anxiety is best reduced by building a strong sense of efficacy. This is achieved through improving cognitive capabilities and self-regulative skills for managing academic demands and self-debilitating thoughts. Many teachers find themselves having

to deal with disruptive and academic at-risk students daily. Teachers who lack a secure sense of instructional efficacy show weak commitment to teaching and spend less time on academic matters (Bandura, 1993).

Intervening in ways to help students academically and/or behaviorally requires teachers to have a knowledge and skill base in this area just as it would be expected of them to have an instructional knowledge and skill base in the areas of English Language Arts or mathematics. Helping students to re-engage in the learning process and become resilient learners requires teachers to implement unfamiliar strategies and draw upon knowledge they may not have. Expecting teachers to re-engage students severely off the graduation path may threaten the teacher's efficacy and cause him or her to doubt his or her effectiveness. This study sought to determine if there existed a correlation between a teacher's perceived sense of efficacy and his or her perceived effectiveness to intervene with students who demonstrate academic or behavioral signs of disengagement.

#### Purpose of the Study

Based on his experience, this researcher has noted two observations: First, many educators, regardless of the grade level they teach, believe they can accurately identify students who will drop out or will probably not graduate on time. Second, an often-voiced belief by faculty members attempting to intervene is usually similar to *I already do this, but it doesn't work here*. This research study focused on teachers' perception of self-efficacy and their perceptions of how to re-engage at-risk students so that they graduate on time. The information gained from this study should be helpful in program implementation that assists students to persist on the path to graduating on time. It is anticipated that the information gained will add to the current literature on educational

leadership regarding at-risk students. Information should prove useful to school districts in developing a systemic district plan that outlines steps for early identification of student disengagement and interventions that assist students' persistence to graduation. This proposed district plan would not only include practices that accurately identify students early and provide interventions at appropriate grade levels, but would also include professional development that will assist in increasing teacher efficacy for implementing interventions.

Providing research-based interventions that assist students who are at risk is important and best practices suggest a first step should be accurate identification of students prior to entrance into high school. "Unless school personnel clearly understand the problems they are trying to solve, they cannot develop meaningful, measurable outcomes" (Baker Evaluation, Research, and Consulting, Inc., n.d., p. 11). Recent research indicates that students at risk of dropping out can be accurately identified as early as their sixth grade year of schooling using high yield indicators (Balfanz, et al., 2007). Pinkus (2008) defines high yield indicators for student dropouts as "collectively, they identify a significant portion of future dropouts and identify students who—absent intervention—have very low odds of graduating" (p. 3).

#### Research Questions

This study examined the self-efficacy perceptions of teachers to see if they in fact believe themselves to be effective in helping at-risk students to graduate on time. The variables studied were teacher efficacy of math and English Language Arts teachers at the fourth, seventh and ninth grade levels and the perceptions of their efforts to re-engage students to persist toward graduation. Specific questions to be answered were:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant difference in subscales of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage (*Behaviorally and Academically*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage behaviorally by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ4: Is there a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students to re-engage academically by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

#### Definitions of Terms

*At-risk students.* A student is considered at-risk if he or she is in danger of dropping out of school and meets one or more of the criteria below: (a) not working on grade level (i.e. reading and/or mathematics); (b) has already been retained or may not meet the requirements necessary for promotion to the next grade; (c) not meeting the requirements necessary for graduation from high school; (d) has insufficient mastery of skills or is not meeting state standards; (e) has a high rate of absenteeism; and/or (f) has



repeated suspensions or expulsions from school (Kansas State Department of Education, 2010, p. 1).

*Self-Efficacy.* The self-efficacy of an individual is his or her “judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391).

*Teacher efficacy.* Teacher efficacy is a type of self-efficacy indicating a teacher’s “belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 233).

#### Delimitations

The delimitations for this study included the following:

1. The scope of the study was to determine if a significant relationship existed between teacher-efficacy perceptions and teacher perceptions of re-engaging at-risk students to graduate on time in one Louisiana school district.
2. The study was limited to data from one school district for convenience purposes.
3. The means of data collection were teacher questionnaires.
4. There may be variables not included in this study that may account for variability in the teacher-efficacy perceptions or teacher effectiveness perceptions.
5. The population of teachers surveyed in this study was restricted to fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and English Language Arts teachers.

### Assumptions

There were four assumptions for this study. The first was that teachers will agree to participate in this study voluntarily. Secondly, participants provided self-reported honest responses to the questionnaires. The third was that participants would set aside adequate time to provide thoughtful responses. The last assumption was that a large enough sample of the population would participate so that the results would be generalizable to other school and district settings.

### Justification

Teachers often hold limited conceptions of what student engagement is and how it relates to learning. After critically evaluating the literature on various types of engagement, Fredericks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) proposed that engagement is a multidimensional construct between an individual and his or her environment. Fredericks et al. clustered the dimensions of engagement into three categories—behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Balfanz et al. (2007) define school disengagement as follows:

Higher order factor composed of correlated subfactors measuring different aspects of the process of detaching from school, disconnecting from its norms and expectations, reducing effort and involvement at school, and withdrawing from a commitment to school and to school completion. (p. 224)

When writing about the learning tasks students are asked to do in schools, Schlechty (2011) made these observations:

Compliance suggests willingness to do what is expected or required by a task.

Involvement requires participation but it does not require compliance. There are, in fact, many students who are involved in school and attend classes yet are also

alienated from school life and the ways schools go about their business. Some are so alienated that they drop out as soon as they can do so legally. (p. 16)

This study will contribute to the body of existing knowledge in that it sought to determine if that which has been shown to be evident in other areas of teacher efficacy is also true in helping students graduate on time. In other words, it sought to investigate whether teacher efficacy correlates with the ultimate measure of student achievement: graduating on time. In spite of the years of research on teacher efficacy and its influence on program measures, Collier (2005) states that there exist “many teachers who fail to provide quality education for our nation’s youth regardless of ethnicity, gender or economic background” (p. 352). This study hypothesized that even before or in conjunction with early identification of at-risk students, teachers’ perceptions of their ability to intervene and how it aligns with this eventual outcome must be taken into consideration.

### Summary

Given the variety of indicators that young children present in early grades, early identification and effective interventions are important in helping students advance towards graduation. Principals and district leaders can lead the efforts by establishing a comprehensive dropout reduction plan focusing on early identification, implementing prevention and intervention strategies, and providing professional development that increases the perceived efficacy for teachers working with at-risk students.

This study presents a quantitative analysis of teachers’ perception of self-efficacy and their perceptions of how to re-engage at-risk students so that they graduate on time. Chapter I presents the foundation upon which the remaining chapters are built upon.

Foundational to this study was the premise that teachers must intervene in a way that helps the student re-engage in the learning process if schools are to meet the expectation that all students are to graduate in four years or less with a standard diploma.

Chapter II expands this premise by presenting the literature that develops a common understanding of what student engagement is and its relationship to student progress towards graduation. A thorough discussion of student disengagement, identifying students who are disengaged, developing relationships with students that promote resiliency, and implementing strategies to re-engage students in school leads to the discussion of teacher perceived competence in re-engaging students in the learning process. Teachers are challenged with ensuring all students learn at high levels, even those who are disruptive and the most academic at-risk.

Teachers work diligently when they believe in their ability to make a difference and these actions lead to higher student achievement. Intervening in ways to help students academically and/or behaviorally so that they become resilient learners impacts teachers' perceived efficacy beliefs. Chapter III discusses the methodological approach that was used for this study. Specifically it describes the participants, procedures, and the instruments that were involved in measuring the perceived efficacy using three subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and teacher effectiveness for re-engaging students both academically and behaviorally. Chapter III provided direction for the statistical methods for this study. Chapter IV discusses the data that were collected and the results from the quantitative analyses that were conducted.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In the last 40 years, the United States has slipped from having the highest graduation rate among industrialized nations to ranking number seventeenth (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009b). When speaking about students who drop out, President Barack Obama (2010) said:

This is a problem we can't afford to accept or ignore. The stakes are too high—for our children, for our economy, for our country. It's time for all of us to come together—parents and students, principals and teachers, business leaders and elected officials—to end America's dropout crisis. (para. 3)

According to Bill Milliken, founder of *Communities In Schools*, the crisis exist because adults have failed to provide and model a community that meets one or more of the five basic needs of young people: (a) a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult; (b) a safe place to learn and grow; (c) a healthy start and a healthy future; (d) a marketable skill to use upon graduation; and (e) a chance to give back to peers and community (Milliken, 2007, p. 40).

However, according to recent studies, not everyone sees America's dropout situation as a crisis. Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Balfanz (2009) found that “only 14 percent of principals and 11 percent of teachers called it a ‘crisis.’ Thirty-five percent of teachers and 24 percent of principals surveyed thought high school dropout was a minor problem or no problem at all” (p. 11). A recent national report from the Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center stated that significant improvement has been made in the national graduation rates. According to this report, the graduation rate is the highest

level it has been in 20 years, with 72% of students completing a high school program of study for the class of 2008. In spite of these improvements, nearly 1.2 million students, or 6,400 students daily, still did not earn a high school diploma (Education Week, 2011).

The remaining sections of Chapter II will present a thorough discussion of Teacher Efficacy as the theoretical framework for which this study is grounded. Literature supporting the challenges facing school personnel who attempt to address the drop out crisis will be discussed. Pertinent information describing the reasons why students drop out, how it affects communities, early identification of those who potentially drop out, student disengagement as a key indicator of the dropout, and the need to increase teacher efficacy as a solution are the concepts for which this literature review is organized around.

#### Efficacy as a Theoretical Framework

Literature suggests that influences from accountability measures have significantly changed the roles and expectations of today's classroom teachers. Since graduating on time is a significant outcome in education and is included in high school accountability measures, teachers are expected to be experts in more areas than just their content area. Ensuring that students graduate on time cannot be just the high school faculty's responsibility. Students graduating on time must be an expectation of every grade level teacher within a school system. The rest of Chapter II develops Teacher Efficacy as a theoretical foundation that will be used as a measure in this study.

#### *Self-Efficacy Theory - Early Beginnings*

According to Guskey and Passaro (1994) the earliest definitions of efficacy can be traced back to the work of psychology researchers Fritz Heider and Robert W. White,

1958 and 1959 respectively. Conducting the first studies of efficacy based on Rotter's social learning theory and inspiring the concept of teacher efficacy is attributed to the RAND organization (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998). Bandura's (1977) work with self-efficacy stemmed from analyses of social learning behavior change and included working with people who had a severe phobia of snakes. His self-efficacy theory originally referred to an individual's perceived capabilities to control their performance in emotionally difficult situations, but later grew to include perceived capabilities to control self-referent actions such as cognitive processes, emotions, and self-regulated behaviors (Schunk, 1991). Bandura surmised that people have a "central processor of efficacy information" in which they "weigh and integrate diverse sources of information concerning their capability, and they regulate their choice behavior and effort expenditure accordingly" (Bandura, 1977, p. 212).

#### *Outcome Expectancy vs. Efficacy Expectancy*

Bandura (1977) defines efficacy expectation as the certainty that one has about being able to effectively perform a behavior required to generate desired outcomes. The question one asks for efficacy is, "Do I have the ability to organize and execute the actions necessary to accomplish a specific task at a desired level?" (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998, p. 210). Bandura (1977) distinguishes outcome expectancy by defining it as behaving a certain way that eventually leads to a particular outcome. Pertaining to outcome expectancy one would ask the question, "If I accomplish the task at that level, what are the likely consequences?" (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998, p. 210). Although a person may have an expected outcome in mind, according to Bandura, an individual's outcome expectation and their efficacy expectation can be very different. One may

believe that certain actions will create particular outcomes, but if the person is not convinced that he or she can execute those actions, knowledge that it leads to the desired outcome alone does not persuade the person to perform those particular actions (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is task specific, making it different from other conceptions of self, such as self-concept, self-worth, and self-esteem (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998).

Self-efficacy has more to do with a person's perception of his or her competence rather than a specific level of competence (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998). According to Bandura, whether people deal with the situation at hand depends upon the degree to which they believe themselves to be effective. He noted that people will attempt to handle situations they believe are within their perceived capabilities but will avoid those they believe exceed their coping capabilities (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1989, 1993).

“Efficacy expectations determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active the efforts” (Bandura, 1977, p. 194). If an individual is missing the required capabilities to perform certain actions, expectations alone are not enough. Given the suitable skills and appropriate incentive, efficacy expectations are a key determination of a person's selection of activities, the degree of effort and length of time put into those activities, as well as, how long the person will exert effort in addressing demanding situations (1977). “As a self-referent perception of capability to execute specific behaviors, individual efficacy beliefs are excellent predictors of individual behavior” (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000).



### *Influences on Self-efficacy Beliefs*

According to Bandura, self-efficacy beliefs are not formed by merely declaring them into existence. Individuals with a belief that contradicts a statement affirming their capability, may not be convinced they are capable no matter how much time they spend telling themselves that they are capable (Bandura, 1989). In fact, Bandura noted that once self-efficacy beliefs are firmly grounded, these beliefs are likely to continue to be strong and unchanging during difficult circumstances. On the other hand, loosely held self-efficacy beliefs are very likely to change during threatening situations. Efficacy beliefs and expectations are the results of a multifaceted cognitive process of self-persuasion influenced by four sources of information: performance mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and social influences, and physiological states (Bandura, 1977, 1989) and are described below.

*Performance mastery experiences* are a source of efficacy information that are based on one's personal mastery of his or her experiences and are particularly influential as one continues to experience success or failure over time (Bandura, 1977). Performance mastery experiences create the most powerful source of efficacy information because they extend from personal experiences (Bandura, 1982, 1989). People do not rely just on their own experiences to influence their capabilities (Bandura, 1982). A *vicarious experience* is one in which people assess their capabilities while viewing others who perform the challenging actions with desired outcomes. Although vicarious experiences are not sources of information as influential as those of personal accomplishments, these experiences can create an expectation within those observing, that it is possible to have success or failure if actions are performed in a similar manner

with similar effort (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1989). *Verbal persuasion* attempts to convince others, by suggestion and other social influences, that they too have the capability to accomplish a challenging task and experience success. The influence of verbal persuasion on the self-efficacy of another individual may vary considerably depending on the perceived credibility of those doing the persuading—the more convincing the source, the more apt are efficacy expectations to change. Because these are not authentic experiences, efficacy expectations experienced in this way are likely to be weaker than those experienced from one's own accomplishments. An additional valid source of information regarding a person's individual capability occurs through *emotional arousal*. People in a challenging situation assess efficacy for their capability in part by judging the conditions that influence their physiological state. The intuitive sense of an individual during demanding situations may be useful as an indicator of vulnerability (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1989).

#### *Efficacy Influences over Choices of Action*

Bandura (1982) points out that accurate assessment of one's capabilities has significant practical importance. Information derived from these four sources becomes helpful only through the cognitive appraisal of prompts people use when integrating efficacy information from a variety of sources. When appraising one's self-efficacy, these sources of information are cognitively processed through self-reflective thought (Bandura, 1989). According to Bandura (1977), when a person improves in a situation, he or she may attribute success to external reasons rather than to capabilities, due to flawed assessments of the situation. If a person attributes success to ability and skill rather than to luck or some outside source of influence, self-efficacy is apt to increase.

Likewise, a person's self-efficacy will decrease if failure is linked to ability or skill rather than attributed to unusual circumstance.

Bandura (1982) notes that when handling situations, a person's efficacy is not a matter of just knowing what to do nor is it a permanent state for the individual. In fact, "it involves a generative capability in which component cognitive, social, and behavioral skills must be organized into integrated courses of action to serve innumerable purposes" (p. 122). Perceptions of one's efficacy affect a person's behavior and emotional reactions to a situation. Perceived self-efficacy has to do with an individual assessing his or her capability to perform the action(s) necessary to address potential circumstances and the decision to repeat those actions (Bandura, 1982, 1989, 1993). Successful actions require skills and self-beliefs of efficacy to perform those skills well (Bandura, 1993).

When faced with difficulties, people with a strong sense of efficacy will envision successful circumstances that guide their actions and will apply greater effort and perseverance, which can lead to additional mastery experiences (Bandura, 1993). If self-efficacy is low even a person who knows what to do will tend to act ineffectually. Those who see themselves as inefficacious are overwhelmed with uncertainty about their capability, experience high levels of stress, envision disappointing circumstances that undermine their actions, and will reduce effort which may lead to giving up completely (Bandura, 1982, 1989, 1993). An individual acting on perceived self-efficacy produces affirming or negating experiences, which in turn causes reassessment of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1989).

Bandura (1982) noted that self-efficacy theory proposes that a person's anxiety is predominantly a perceived inefficacy in dealing with potentially aversive conditions, but

fears are lessened when experiences increase the person's coping efficacy. Self-efficacy theory attributes giving up to two different reasons—either because people doubt their capabilities in getting done what is expected of them or it may be that they are confident in their capabilities but believe their efforts to be insignificant due to unsupportive environmental factors.

### *Self Efficacy and Academic Achievement*

According to Bandura (1993), emphasizing one's deficiencies minimizes the influences of self-regulation and results in decreased performance. Learning environments that minimize competition and comparison to others, emphasizes ability as an obtainable skill, and self-assessment of progress and personal accomplishments are apt to develop a sense of efficacy that encourage academic achievement. A person's perceptions about the degree to which his or her environment is controllable impacts efficacy beliefs. Bandura noted that exercising control in one's environment entails two aspects. The first relates to the level and strength of personal efficacy in generating change through perseverance and innovative use of resources. The second relates to the ability one has in altering his or her environment. These aspects represent the limitations and possibilities that the environment provides to experience personal efficacy. A person overwhelmed with self-doubt expects hopelessness when expending efforts to change circumstances and creates minimal change, even in environments that provide plenty of opportunities. A person with a strong efficacy belief, through creativity and perseverance, will implement some level of control, even in environments with minimal opportunities and plenty of limitations (Bandura, 1993).

There are three key ways in which perceived efficacy impacts academic progress: students' self-efficacy beliefs in regulating their own learning and achieving in various academic courses, teacher's self-efficacy beliefs to motivate and support student learning, and the faculty and staff's perceived collective efficacy that their school can bring about important academic progress (Bandura, 1993). Bandura asserted that educating students should include preparing them with the "intellectual tools, self-beliefs, and self-regulatory capabilities to educate themselves throughout their lifetime" (1993, p. 136).

### Teacher Efficacy

When measuring the effectiveness of reading programs and interventions, the 1976 RAND study measured efficacy based on two questions answered by teachers (Goddard, et al., 2000; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998). The two questions were "*When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment*" and "*If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students*" and the summed scores from the answers measured *Teacher Efficacy* as a construct (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998). For the RAND study, teacher efficacy set out to explain the degree to which student motivation and learning were believed by teachers to be within their control or within the environment. It was assumed that a source of reinforcement for teachers was increased student motivation and performance. It was believed that teachers who had a high level of efficacy were those who could influence student motivation and achievement and find reinforcement by this influence (Goddard, et al., 2000). An outcome of the RAND study determined that

teacher efficacy and variations in reading achievement among minority students were strongly related (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998).

### *Teacher Efficacy as a Construct*

Various studies of teacher efficacy have established that teacher efficacy is a multidimensional construct (Guskey & Passaro, 1994) consisting of two separate factors, personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) personal teaching efficacy refers to one's feelings of competence as a teacher. The second factor, general teaching efficacy, reflected a variety of meanings in research: "external influences" similar to Rotter's construct of external control, "outcome expectancy" reflecting Bandura's second component of social cognitive theory, and lastly, the outcome an individual teacher could expect from teaching as related to "what teachers in general could be expected to accomplish" (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998, p. 223). According to Guskey and Passaro (1994) teacher efficacy is thought of as "teachers' belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be considered difficult or unmotivated" (p. 628).

Guskey and Passaro (1994) focused on teacher efficacy scales in an attempt to bring clarity to research interpretations of the two factors—personal efficacy and general teaching efficacy—measures that extended from Rotter's locus of control and Bandura's social cognitive theory. Their work distinguished these factors as an internal and external dichotomy rather than personal and general dimensions. The factors reflect a teacher's belief about the influence he or she has, along with his or her belief regarding the influence all teachers have on student learning, either personally (internal) or outside of

the learning environment (external). If a teacher's perception of power is attributed internally for a learning context, he or she is more likely to take on those actions to bring about the desired outcomes. If influence is perceived by the teacher to be an external factor (i.e., student ability or poverty constraints) he or she may be less likely to perform actions to bring about the desired outcomes. According to Guskey and Passaro, perceptions of these two factors are somewhat linked but appear to operate independently of one another. For instance, a teacher may believe he or she can be a powerful influence for the academic achievement of a student, in spite of holding the belief that the home life puts that student at-risk of academic success (1994).

Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) developed their own model of teacher efficacy that integrated conceptual elements from research that evolved from Rotter and Bandura's theories. Their model involved two dimensions: *analyzing the teaching task and its context* as well as *self-perceptions of teaching competence*. Analyzing the teaching task and its context is a means-ends consideration that pertains to distinct teaching situations. According to their model, teacher efficacy is the teacher's assessment of the relative importance between aspects that restrict teaching and the available resources needed to facilitate learning within that context. Assessing self-perceptions of teaching competence involves teachers evaluating their personal capabilities including but not limited to their skillfulness, content knowledge, strategies implementation, or personality traits in light of personal limitations or liabilities within the teaching context (Goddard, et al., 2000; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998).

### *Measuring Teacher Efficacy*

“Teacher efficacy is context specific” (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998, p. 227).

Assessing efficacy requires analysis of a teaching task within context and one’s perceived capabilities of performing the teaching task within the context. For example, teachers perceiving themselves to be highly efficacious when teaching a core content course, such as science, in a rural high school, may feel inefficacious when teaching science to fourth grade students or possibly to students in an urban high school (Goddard, et al., 2000; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998).

The two dimensions of the model presented by Tschannen-Moran and her colleagues, task analysis and perceived competence, are influenced by Bandura’s four sources of self-efficacy information: mastery experiences, physiological/emotional arousal, vicarious experience, and social persuasion. *Mastery experiences* remain the most influential source of efficacy information but also provide information about the intricacy of teaching tasks, as well, as the self-perception of competence. When teaching, the intensity of *emotional and physiological arousal* a teacher experiences contributes to self-perceptions of teaching competence. If the task demands all of a person’s energy and emotional resources, this state may add little to a person’s sense of teaching competence. Through *vicarious experiences*, teachers begin to decide which students can learn and by how much, who may be responsible for the way in which students learn, and whether teachers can even be the difference in learning. By observing successful teachers, a teacher may decide that he or she too can handle the teaching task and that the resources are sufficient to be successful for that task. Observing credible masterful teachers teach in skillful ways can have an effect on the personal teaching competence of



the observer. *Verbal persuasion* can range from offering the teacher encouragement and suggestions for overcoming problems to providing specific feedback about the teacher's performance. Coursework and professional development opportunities provide teachers with strategies and skills related to the task of teaching but may not have an impact on a teacher's perception of teaching competence until these strategies and skills positively influence student learning. Supervisors and other colleagues can be an effective influence of efficacy information for teaching tasks if specific performance feedback is given as it relates to the demands of the teaching tasks. A person's perceptions of teaching competence may diminish if the feedback is overly critical and global rather than strategic and practical (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998).

In Tschannen-Moran et al.'s model, analysis of the teaching task and the judgment of one's own teaching competence are influenced by how one cognitively processes these sources of efficacy information, which consequentially affects teacher efficacy. Teachers might attribute their ability to impact learning to reasons outside of themselves or to personal assets or liabilities they bring to the teaching task. Efficacy judgments by the teacher involve the analysis of the teaching task (what's expected of a teacher in the teaching environment) and an assessment of what it would take to be successful in the context. According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), various concerns, such as student ability and motivation, appropriate learning strategies, and teaching space, as well as, contextual factors consisting of principal leadership, school climate, and collegial support, are taken into consideration.

Self-perception of teaching competence partially influences teacher efficacy. Although judgment of teacher efficacy is an anticipation of future capability, it is

influenced by perceptions of current performance. The strength of the teacher's judgment of current abilities and strategies as adequate for the teaching task at hand influences performance in that context. When teachers believe they know how to overcome perceived deficiencies in their capabilities for certain contexts, a resilient sense of teacher efficacy is formed (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998).

According to Tschannen-Moran et al. teacher efficacy is "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (1998, p. 233). Teacher efficacy is recursive—the success of a teaching task creates new mastery experiences, which in turn provides new efficacy information that influences potential efficacy beliefs. Increased efficacy can influence a teacher to persist, leading to enhanced teaching performances, which circles back to even more efficacy increases. The recursive nature is also true for reduced efficacy. Eventually, this recursive process levels off, leaving the teacher with a stable set of efficacy beliefs.

#### *Changing Standards for Teachers*

Increased expectations for schools challenge teachers' current beliefs about their academic and behavioral strategies. Initially, teachers' personal efficacy is negatively affected by new innovation and programs. Principals can help teachers persist and remain resilient through processes of change by focusing on the positive results experienced from teacher behaviors. In this way teachers feel a greater sense of professional control and a greater sense of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998).

## Meeting the Academic and Behavioral Needs of Challenging Students

### *Teacher Efficacy over Time*

According to Lopes, Monteiro, Sil, Rutherford, and Quinn (2004) high demands are placed on classroom organization and management for hard-to-teach students who are learning and behaviorally disordered. In their study, Lopes et al. (2004) assessed teachers' sense of efficacy and their perceptions about teaching students who have difficulty learning and/or have behavior problems. As difficult students grow older, the results suggest that teachers' sense of efficacy weakens and teachers believe they are unable to properly teach these students. Three important findings from their research suggest that: (a) more than 85% of the regular education and special education teachers assert that resources are insufficient to teach students with learning and/or behavior problems; (b) more than 90% surveyed acknowledge that inclusion is a set of services from which students with learning and/or behavior problems could benefit; and (c) more than 90% of the teachers believe that students' needs are not met by the single national curriculum. Although most teachers are willing to teach students with problems, most feel inadequate about where and how to teach students with learning and behavioral challenges (Lopes, et al., 2004).

Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, and Quek (2008) examined the efficacy of teachers who were teaching low achieving adolescent students using the dimensions of instruction, classroom management, and student engagement from Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) model. These three dimensions of teacher efficacy were examined in relation to teacher attributes and the teacher-student relationship. The teacher's sense of efficacy in providing instructional strategies and engaging students was higher for teachers with

fifteen or more years of professional experience as compared to teachers with less than five years of experience. The relation between the three dimensions of the teacher-student relationship, *Satisfaction*, *Instrumental Help*, and *Conflict* and specific teacher variables reveal a steady deterioration in perceived teacher-student relationship in the area of instrumental help with older, more experienced teachers. In order for teachers to be perceived as sources of instrumental help, teachers must demonstrate a sense of caring that addresses the psychological and social needs of their students. Conflict in teacher-student relationship was found to predict teacher efficacy in classroom management and instructional strategies for teachers of low achieving students. Relationships with students that are low conflict were anticipated to increase a teacher's sense of efficacy in teaching low achieving students and managing the classroom.

#### *Efficacy and Student Transitioning*

Munthe and Thuen (2009) examined the perceptions that lower secondary school teachers (Grades 8-10) held about the pervasiveness and types of problems among students transitioning into lower secondary school. Of those students transitioning from Elementary school, teachers believed it to be problematic for about 30% of the students. Also a large percent of teachers (70%) believed that at least 25% of the students lack academic skills, had problems following directions, working independently, or working within groups. The study measured teachers' professional certainty about student learning (decisions made regarding methods and tasks appropriate for students) and two subscales of teacher efficacy—efficacy about student learning and efficacy about student behavior. While there wasn't a significant relationship between teachers' professional certainty and teachers' efficacy for student learning or efficacy for student behavior, there

were important relationships regarding the perceived student problems and beliefs regarding inclusion. Teachers who reported higher values of certainty about student learning were more apt to include students in the regular classroom setting who were perceived to have learning or behavior problems. Teachers who reported a strong efficacy tended to report lower values of academic and behavior problems among students. In addition, teachers who reported being less inclined towards inclusion, reported higher numbers of students having problems. For the perception of problems associated with students transitioning into the lower secondary school, teacher efficacy about learning was the only variable significantly associated with the perception of problems. Teachers who believe in their capability to help all students learn tend to perceive fewer problems for new students (Munthe & Thuen, 2009).

#### *Efficacy and Academics*

When conducting whole class instruction, high-efficacy teachers had higher student engagement and when working with small groups of students, they were better able to keep other students engaged than did low-efficacy teachers. Teachers who have high expectations of student learning and are confident in their ability to teach, communicate their high expectations by persisting longer with students until they understand the material being taught and they do so with less criticism (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

When investigating the relationships among teacher beliefs, instructional practices and classroom goal orientations in high school science classrooms, Deemer (2004) revealed that personal teaching efficacy and teachers' perceptions of a supportive school culture were related to the teachers' use of strategies that focused on mastery and

understanding of the task. This positive relationship between levels of personal teaching efficacy and use of mastery learning indicate that teachers with high self-confidence in their teaching capabilities design classroom environments focused on effort and learning outcomes (Deemer, 2004).

The expectations of teachers have changed and expanded over the years to include delivery of social-emotional curricula and other preventive interventions designed to meet the academic and behavioral needs of students (Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009). Ransford et al. (2009) investigated the effects of teachers' psychological experiences (burnout and efficacy) and their perceptions of curriculum supports (e.g., school administration, training, and coaching) on two dimensions of implementation (dosage and quality) of an evidenced-based, social-emotional curriculum. The curriculum was a universal, social-emotional intervention designed for implementation in kindergarten through Grade 5. Teachers indicating higher levels of efficacy were more likely go above and beyond the required implementation. But those teachers experiencing higher levels of burnout were less likely to use the suggested supplemental curriculum components.

#### *Efficacy and Teaching Language*

Yilmaz (2011) examined the efficacy beliefs of Turkish EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers, their self-perceptions of teaching efficacy concerning teaching English, and their self-reported English proficiency levels. The results from a study of 54 primary and high school teachers signified that teachers' perceived efficacy correlated with their self-reported English language proficiency. Additionally, teachers'

efficacy for instructional strategies scored higher than their efficacy for management and engagement.

### *Efficacy and Behavior Problems*

Employing teachers who believe they are ready to meet the needs of students with difficult behavior and who exhibit an attitude of acceptance and willingness to teach all students is essential for realizing the legal and ethical charges by federal mandates (Baker, 2005).

Today's educators are asked to meet the diverse needs of all students, including those with emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD). The movement towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom combined with recent mandates requiring all learners to meet or even exceed established curricular guidelines, makes it increasingly challenging for educators to meet their moral and ethical responsibilities. (Baker, 2005, p. 51)

Liljequist and Renk (2007) examined the relationships among teachers' perceptions of students' emotional and behavioral problems and their perceived self-efficacy and psychological symptoms. Externalizing behavioral problems, such as acting out, are displayed outwardly. This could include social defiance directed against another person. Internalizing behavioral problems, such as depression, are students' distress problems expressed inwardly. Results suggest that student externalizing behavioral problems bothered teachers more than internalizing behavioral problems. Additionally, teachers tended to believe that students had better control over externalizing behavioral problems than demonstrated. Personal teaching efficacy was a significant predictor of teacher perceptions of the intensity of internalizing students' behavioral problems.

Perceived student control over externalizing behavioral problems was predicted by teachers' personal and general teaching efficacy. Similar patterns were illustrated by both regular and special education teachers. Teachers' own feelings about themselves and their sense of control and effectiveness interact with their perceptions of students' emotional and behavioral problems and their ratings of these problems (Liljequist & Renk, 2007).

Baker (2005) examined teachers' beliefs about their personal perceptions of self-efficacy concerning general classroom management skills and their readiness (ability and willingness) to carry out specific behavior management techniques that meet the individual needs of their students. Results indicate that secondary teachers report feeling significantly less able, willing, and ready to manage challenging student behavior than those teachers at the lower grade levels. The greatest sense of efficacy reported by teachers included establishing appropriate rules for students and seeking help from coworkers. However, when dealing with students who have serious behavior issues, teachers reported low-efficacy in keeping defiant students involved, reaching the most difficult students, and keeping problems from ruining class (p. 56). Results from the study indicate that teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy for managing a classroom environment significantly correlates to their overall readiness for implementing specific behavior intervention strategies (Baker, 2005). Self-efficacy, along with empathy and perceived seriousness, were teacher variables determined to be important factors in predicting a teacher's response to student bullying behaviors (Yoon, 2004). Teachers with low self-efficacy felt less able to handle students with challenging behaviors and less willing to implement specialized behavioral strategies than those with high self-



efficacy. Taken together, “these results indicate that as a teacher’s perceived self-efficacy increases, so does the teacher’s ability, willingness, and readiness for managing student behaviors” (Baker, 2005, p. 59). Using Bandura’s four sources of efficacy information as guidance, administrators can help teachers differentiate discipline support to students who demonstrate challenging behaviors. By providing support in skill development, external validation, and guidance to teachers, they are more likely to feel comfortable in implementing new strategies (Baker, 2005).

### *Efficacy and Behavior Interventions*

Nunn and Jantz (2009) examined the relationship between the process of implementing the school-wide framework, Response to Intervention (RtI), and the self-efficacy of teachers. According to their results, the implementation variables, RtI-Involvement and RtI-Implementation, were associated with differences in the reported efficacy beliefs of teachers. The topics and applications provided through the RtI professional development that dealt with curriculum, instruction, environment, and individual differences were consistent mediators for success of students (Nunn & Jantz, 2009).

When using academic and behavioral interventions, there is a need to define and thoroughly examine correlates, such as teacher belief and perception of results, and those associated with RtI implementation (Nunn, Jantz, & Butikofer, 2009). In a statewide RtI initiative, Nunn et al. (2009) examined the concurrent validity between two measures which focused on the need to define elements of teacher efficacy, as well as related outcomes anticipated from RtI implementation—*Teacher Efficacy Beliefs and Behavior Scale* and with the *Indicators of RtI Effectiveness Scale*. Increases in teacher efficacy

were consistently found to be associated with “perceptions of improved outcomes of intervention, satisfaction with results, collaborative team process, and data-based decisions” (Nunn, 2009, p. 217).

In their study, Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, and Barber (2010) examined teachers’ perceptions of student misbehavior as a predictor of the emotional exhaustion of teachers, and the role of teacher efficacy beliefs in handling student misbehavior as a potential mediator of this relationship. Additionally, they examined the process of teacher emotion regulation as a potential mediator between teacher perceptions of student misbehavior as a predictor of emotional exhaustion. Tsouloupas et al. (2010) determined that teacher efficacy in managing student misbehavior was found to mediate the relationship between perceived student misbehavior and emotional exhaustion. This was not the case for emotion regulation. In spite of a significant direct effect between the two emotion regulation strategies (cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression) on emotional exhaustion, both strategies failed to illustrate a mediating effect between perceived student misbehavior and emotional exhaustion. In order for teachers to successfully manage difficult student behaviors without emotional escalation, Tsouloupas et al. (2010) suggest that improving teacher efficacy in situation-specific conditions should be considered an important factor of continuous professional development. Strategies that incorporate effective classroom management skills can help improve teachers’ perceptions of efficacy in handling student misconduct (Tsouloupas, et al., 2010).

Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, and Leaf (2010) sought to determine if student referrals to out of classroom services (academic and disciplinary) were related to teachers

feeling incapable of handling a student's needs in the classroom. According to Pas et al. (2010) limited studies have examined the management of discipline problems (school-wide or classroom-based) and the referral of school-based services that are proactive instead of reactive. In their study, the influence of teacher burnout and efficacy on responses to disciplinary problems (e.g. referrals to the principal, suspensions) and referrals to school-based support services (e.g. special education) were examined. Results indicated that efficacy and burnout were not significantly related to special education referrals, referrals to the principal's office, or in-school suspensions. But, contrary to what was expected, teachers reporting lower efficacy were less likely to refer students to Student Support Teams. Additionally, students were less likely to receive an out-of school suspension from their teachers who reported high levels of burnout.

#### *Efficacy and Diverse Student Population*

The achievement of all students is influenced by teachers especially those considered ethnically diverse students of poverty (Tucker, et al., 2005). The objective of the study by Tucker and his colleagues (2005) was to develop and assess a training program that would advance the efficacy of teachers working with students of diverse cultures. The study examined whether teachers would benefit from training in the core principles of a research-based program for low-income African American students. The training set out to help teachers gain awareness of the multiple external factors (e.g., social, cultural, economic, political, school, neighborhood, family, parents) that may impact the academic and social behaviors of children, and to help teachers teach and empower students to achieve under whatever circumstances exist for them. By providing learning experiences designed to promote self-empowerment (practicing self-praise,

using adaptive skills, and implementing strategies to promote social, academic, and life success), culturally diverse students can replace problem behaviors with appropriate skills and strategies to be successful academically and socially. According to Tucker et al., teachers can help students decrease or eliminate problem behaviors by developing positive relationships with students that include the specific goals of (a) making them feel important and respected; (b) uncovering causes pertaining to their problem behaviors; and (c) acknowledging students when they demonstrate positive behaviors and attitudes. An additional strategy to increase teacher efficacy was to help teachers realize the importance and the meaning of cultural sensitivity through verbal and nonverbal communication, differences in norms among various cultures, and considering all cultures from a perspective of equality. An additional culturally sensitive strategy would include improved communication between parents and teachers about ways to help students be successful academically. Tucker et al. determined that teacher-efficacy for working with children from diverse backgrounds can be significantly increased. Through brief training and opportunities for ongoing consultation, teachers can feel competent to effectively teach and improve the academic achievement all students, including those who are of culturally diverse backgrounds.

### *Efficacy and Professional Development*

Reeves indicates that there are three conditions that influence professional development—integrity, efficacy, and diligence. Integrity, as related to professional development, is an assessment of the professional learning activities as related to established student goals. Professional development must have an important effect on student outcomes—this he indicates is efficacy. The third condition necessary for

professional development to have a considerable impact on student success is that it must provide opportunity for teacher participants to apply their learning, or what Reeves refers to as diligence (2000b).

According to Ross and Bruce (2007) teacher efficacy as a construct has measured a variety of teaching responsibilities, but few researchers have reported the effects of methods aimed to enhance teacher efficacy. In their study, they designed a professional development program to increase the teacher efficacy of Grade 6 mathematics teachers that explicitly addressed the four sources of teacher-efficacy information identified in Bandura's social-cognition theory (1986). Standards-based mathematics teaching changes the roles of the teachers' job and the expectations of student learning. Teachers are asked to facilitate student explorations and students are expected to develop their conceptual understanding using abstract and practical knowledge. In doing so, classroom environments are designed differently to include a facilitative and constructivist approach which may be a source of concerns for the teacher.

In the intervention model provided by Ross and Bruce (2007), the professional development included two strategies intended to provide mastery experiences for the teachers—managing classroom discussions and redefining success. The mastery experiences designed for managing classroom discussion included: providing the teachers with rich learning tasks and modeling implementation, requiring that teachers implement the learned strategies in their own classroom settings, and following up by having teachers share their experiences and student work. The second strategy redefined successful learning experiences as teacher-facilitated contexts which included student knowledge construction instead of rote learning. Additional vicarious experiences were

provided through professional development in which participants shared success in implementing reform practices with their peers. In their study, treatment teachers outperformed control-group teachers on three measures of teacher efficacy; however, efficacy for classroom management was the only one statistically significant. In a standards-based mathematics curriculum, explicit consideration to teacher beliefs regarding their capacity to affect student learning is essential for skill acquisition (Ross & Bruce, 2007).

### *Coaching for Teacher Efficacy*

In a study investigating the relation between hours spent coaching teachers for efficacy in a particular area of content instruction and student outcomes, Shidler (2008) found a significant correlation in year one of a three year model. Year one of the coaching model provided on-site focused coaching with facilitation and support of theory into practice for instructional efficacy for students' alphabet recognition. According to Shilder, adult learning theory suggest that teachers must be allowed to learn at their own pace and have time for repeated and guided practice of their new skills. Coaches can be employed to assist teachers to replace old practices with new behaviors. The coaching process provides teachers an opportunity to reflect on existing practices through conversations that are focused on specific goals. Participants then gather information that leads to developing a plan for accomplishing the specific goals. In order to develop various levels of teacher efficacy, coaches should "focus on specific content, model techniques and instructional practices, observe teacher practices, and dedicate consultative hours to working with teachers when children are not present in order to better facilitate reflection" (Shidler, 2008, p. 459).

## The Dropout Challenge

Choosing to drop out of school is a serious problem (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009). In their publication, *Grad Nation: A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis*, Balfanz, Horning, Bridgeland, and McNaught (2009) claim that a student drops out every 26 seconds in this country, contributing to the 1.2 million who leave annually. Students who are low-income, from single parents, or minorities are disproportionately affected (50% of African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans will not graduate). In approximately 2,000 of the nation's high schools, 40% of the freshman that enter will not graduate with their class (p. 9). For the 2007-2008 school year, there were 613,379 students in grades 9-12 in 49 reporting states and the District of Columbia who dropped out (Stillwell, 2010).

For the 2007-2008 school year, 79.9% of Louisiana citizens aged 25 and over had at least a high school diploma. This was below the nation's average of 84.5%, ranking Louisiana 49<sup>th</sup> among states and the District of Columbia. For persons in the same age category but with no high school diploma, this percentage was 20.1% as compared to the national average of 15.5% (Louisiana Department of Education, 2008). The percentage of seventh through twelfth grade students in Louisiana who were counted as dropouts for the school years 2001-02 through 2006-07 ranged from a low of 6.6% to a high of 7.4%. The grade levels with the largest percentage of students counted as dropouts were grade 9, with a high of 7.8%, and grade 12, with a high of 9.0% in the 2003-04 school year, but hovering around 7.1% for most years (Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning, 2008). Most Louisiana dropouts (59%) for the 2007-2008 school year were African American students, while Caucasian students represented 37% of this population.

Of African American students in Louisiana, 9% tended to drop out, while 5% of Caucasian students did so (Louisiana Department of Education, 2008).

### *Economic Impact*

The consequences are high for both the student who leaves early and for our society as well. “Governors cannot afford for youth to walk out of school” (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009, p. 10). Dropouts have an economic impact on states’ business growth and development. A determination by high-wage employers to relocate to a particular region of a state often depends on their capability to hire educated and skilled workers (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009). Employment opportunities are scarce for the dropout, who usually has to choose low-skilled and low-paying positions (Christle, et al., 2007). Only 35% of African American youth have jobs who are between the ages of 16 and 24 and who do not have a high school diploma. The percentages are higher for white and Hispanic youth between ages 16 and 24 who are employed without a diploma, 57% and 61% respectively. Without guidance and goals, many dropouts will end up unemployed or in prison (Barton, 2005).

There is a relationship between a person’s educational attainment and his or her employment status. A person with more education was found less likely to be unemployed. “Nine percent of those ages 25–34 with less than a high school diploma were unemployed in 2004, compared with 6 percent of high school completers, 5 percent of those with some college education, and 3 percent of those with a bachelor’s or higher degree” (U.S. Department of Education, 2005, pg 51). This pattern was true for all racial/ethnic groups.



### *Earning Power*

According to Barton (2005), high percentages of high school dropouts have experienced diminished earning power. Using 2002 constant dollars, earnings for students without a diploma have diminished over time. In 1971, male dropouts in the age range of 25 to 34 with a full time job earned an average of \$35,087 (in 2002 dollars) for a full year of work. In 2002, these earnings diminished by 34.7% to a yearly income of \$22,903. In 1971, female earnings for those who dropped out were \$19,888 (in 2002 dollars) as compared to \$17,114 in 2002 (Barton, 2005). Louisiana's high school dropouts from the class of 2008 "will cost the state \$6.9 billion in lost wages over their lifetimes" (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009c). Forty-seven percent of dropouts surveyed said it is harder to find a good job (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). Students who persist towards graduation have career change opportunities available to them, experience possibilities for advancements, and are able to compete for jobs (Bridgeland, et al., 2009).

### *Methods of Defining the Dropout*

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is a branch of the U.S. Department of Education that has been providing data on dropout trends for nearly forty years. NCES has the primary federal responsibility for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States. In its Common Core of Data (CCD), it defines graduates as those who are recipients of a regular high school diploma or a diploma that recognizes some higher level of academic achievement by meeting or exceeding the coursework and performance standards for high school completion established by a state or another relevant authority. Students awarded alternative

credentials such as a certificate of completion or an equivalency credential are considered high school completers but not as regular graduates (Stillwell, 2010).

The Louisiana Department of Education uses the NCES definition of a dropout, which is a person enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year but who has not graduated from high school or completed an approved educational program. The following conditions do not constitute a student as a drop out: death, temporary absence due to suspension or illness, transfer to another public school district outside of Louisiana, private school, or state-or district-approved education program such as special education programs, home-based instruction, and school-sponsored programs leading to a GED (Ann E. Casey Foundation, n.d.).

#### *Calculating the Dropout Rate*

According to the NCES, there are two methods commonly used in reporting the dropout rate—the *event* dropout rate and the *status* dropout rate. The *national event dropout rate* is an estimate of the percentage of students who exited high school within one calendar year—usually October 1<sup>st</sup> of one school year to September 30<sup>th</sup> of the following school year—without earning a high school diploma or a GED. It includes students ages 15 through 24 in the United States in both private and public high schools, and measures the percentage of those who dropped out during grades 10-12. While the *event dropout rate* provides information on students exiting school before completion, it does not provide an accurate picture of the problem in our country nor is it best for describing the percentage of people who lack a high school credential. Because it measures the percentage of students who dropped out in a single year, the national event dropout rates are usually low and do not accurately represent the complete picture.

NCES reported that for the 2007 school year, 3.5% of the students who were enrolled in public or private high schools in 2006 left school before October of 2007 without completing a high school program. However, 1972 event dropout rates declined, from 6.1% in 1972 to 3.5% in 2007 (Cataldi, et al., 2009).

The *national status dropout rate* focuses on an overall age group and is usually higher than the *event dropout rate*. Instead of the percentage of students who dropped out in a calendar year, the national status dropout rate is the percentage of those individuals who are in the 16-through 24-year-old age range, are not in school, and have not earned a high school diploma or equivalency credential. The *status dropout rate* is good for measuring overall educational attainment of young adults in the country, but is not helpful in describing the completion rates of high schools. In October 2007, approximately 3.3 million young adults in this age range were considered a dropout using the *status dropout* definition. This status dropout rate accounted for 8.7% of the 37 million non-institutionalized 16-through 24-year-olds who are living in the United States. In the same 35-year period that compared the *event dropout rates*, *status dropout rates* also declined from 14.6% to 8.7% (Cataldi, et al., 2009).

Most secondary school principals surveyed indicated that the *event dropout rate* was the method by which student dropouts were calculated at their school. The predominant use of this method shows how the seriousness of the dropout crisis can be underestimated. Less than 15% stated that the *status dropout rate* was used for their students (Kemp, 2006). Kemp recommended that consensus be reached on a “uniform method of reporting when a student has dropped out of school and how to calculate and report the dropout rate” (p. 247).

## Counting the Graduate

There have been multiple methods in calculating the graduate as well. One statistic that has been around for a long time is the high school graduate as a percentage of 17-year-old population. From 1870 to 2001 the rate peaked at 77% in 1969 but dropped to 68.8% in 1998 and has held close to that until 2001 (Barton, 2005).

The Editorial Projects Research Center (EPERC) uses a method called the *Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI)* to calculate graduation rates. The CPI method calculates graduation rates by multiplying the promotion ratios of the four grade levels in a school or district. For example, to calculate the CPI for the class of 2010 one would use the formula below:

$$\text{CPI} = \frac{\text{10th,fall 2010}}{\text{9th,fall 2009}} \times \frac{\text{11th,fall 2010}}{\text{10th,fall 2009}} \times \frac{\text{12th,fall 2010}}{\text{11th,fall 2009}} \times \frac{\text{Diploma recipients, spring 2010}}{\text{12th,fall 2009}}$$

The CPI includes only those students who received a standard high school diploma and estimates the percentage of ninth graders expected to receive a diploma four years later (Education Week, 2011).

Another method of assessing educational attainment is the *average freshman graduation rate (AFGR)*. According to the NCES, the AFGR provides an estimate of the percentage of public high school students who graduate with a regular diploma within 4 years of starting the ninth grade. The AFGR uses an estimate of the size of an incoming freshman class and divides it by the number of diplomas awarded four years later. The size of an incoming freshman class is estimated by averaging the enrollment numbers from the eighth grade year, ninth grade year, and the tenth grade year (Cataldi, et al., 2009).

The AFGR is not the inverse of the dropout rate, and it illustrates a different picture of the success of public high school students. It emphasizes graduating *on time* and with a standard diploma. Therefore, this rate, when compared to others, illustrates that many less public school students are leaving high school successfully than originally thought. For the 2005-06 school year, the national AFGR was 73.2%. During this time, “ten states had rates below 70.0 percent—Alabama, Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, and New York” (Cataldi, et al., 2009, p. 10).

The Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center examined graduation requirements for the class of 2007 in four areas: (a) course taking requirements to receive a standard diploma; (b) state graduation exit exams; (c) state exit credentials; and (d) age at which a student may legally withdraw from school. State policies regarding graduation requirements vary considerably from state to state. Course requirements range from a minimum of 13 credits to a high of 24 credits to participate in commencement exercises. Twenty-two states required exit exams for the class of 2007 and half of those states only required students to pass English and mathematics tests to graduate. Twenty-four states awarded advanced diplomas and 28 states offered an alternative credential for students with disabilities. Compulsory attendance ages ranged from 16 to 18. About half the states required students to remain in school until their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, but 28 states have exemptions allowing students to leave for designated reasons before the minimum state age requirement with parental consent. Forty-two states required an individual to be 18 years of age in order to take the General Educational Development test (GED) (Lloyd, 2007).

### *Agreeing on the Graduation Rate*

Reaching a consensus in defining graduation calculations has taken time and should prove to be important. Graduation calculations serve as a valuable measure of school performance for various stakeholders, a decision-making tool for targeting interventions, and the foundation of a sound accountability system (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009a). A national graduation goal was set in 1989 by then President George H. W. Bush and the nation's governors. A high school graduation rate of 90% was set as the national education goal to be reached by the year 2000 (Steinberg, Johnson, & Pennington, 2006). In 2002, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) adopted as its definition of the graduation rate, "the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years" (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009a, p. 1). However, the Department of Education accepted a variety of calculation methods from states that did not meet this definition.

In 2005 all 50 governors voluntarily signed the National Governors Association (NGA) Graduation Counts Compact which made four assurances: (a) Use a common formula to calculate graduation rates; (b) Build capacity at the state level for data collection; (c) Create multiple indicators for student completion outcomes; and (d) report annual progress (Curran & Reyna, 2009). All governors accepted the NGA's recommendation to calculate a high school graduation rate based on the number of students who graduate on time, with a regular diploma in a given year, divided by the number of first-time ninth graders who entered four years prior, adjusting for transfer students (Curran & Reyna, 2009; Smith, 2006).

According to Smith (2006) the definition resulted in the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{On time graduate by year X}}{[(\text{first time 9th graders in year X} - 4) + (\text{transfers in}) - (\text{transfers out})]}$$

The graduation cohort rate, like the *average freshman graduation rate*, pertains to students who receive a standard diploma; however, it differs in that it does not include students who earn a certificate of completion or attendance, or a GED certificate. Unlike the AFGR, the cohort rate accounts for each uniquely identified student instead of a three-year average of the enrollment numbers. To do this, states must have the ability to identify first time ninth graders. Implementing a student-level longitudinal data system that tracks each student's enrollment status each year must become part of the core infrastructure (Smith, 2006).

#### *Accountability*

While the NGA graduation rate was not initially intended to be used as an accountability tool, in 2008 the U.S. Department of Education released regulations under NCLB, requiring states to use this method as a *four-year adjusted cohort rate* beginning the 2011-2012 school year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009a). Twenty states calculate their high school graduation rate using the Compact formula and publically report this information. Of those states, 18 of them report additional information on student completion outcomes and 19 report disaggregated data for graduation rates of sub groups of students (Curran & Reyna, 2009). In the 2006-2007 school year, Louisiana began using the four-year cohort rate as a measure of the graduation rate. The Graduation Rate and Graduation Index are produced annually to get an accurate picture of high school completion rates in Louisiana. The dropout rate accounts for 5% of a School's School Performance Score (SPS) (Louisiana Department of Education, 2008).

For the 2007-2008 school year, the Graduation Rate for Louisiana was 65.9%, with district graduation cohort rates ranging from a high of 87.3% to a low of 49.3%. Graduation rates in Louisiana's higher performing schools were 76% and the lower performing schools rates were 61%. The Graduation Rate is also calculated for subgroups of students based on ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status. Additionally, students completing school through the GED program are included in the Louisiana's SPS. Schools do not earn full accountability points for students who do not graduate with a standard diploma, but do earn points for those students who are awarded a GED. An average of 10,000 students take the GED test each year in Louisiana; of that number, approximately 73% receive their GED credentials (Louisiana Department of Education, 2008).

#### Who Drops Out?

“Schools are a microcosm of the community; whatever exists in a community will exist in the schools. Therefore, the greater numbers of risk factors in the community, the higher level of school dropouts” (Edwards & Edwards, 2007, p.10). Students stated that choosing to drop out includes such reasons as: pregnancy, being academically delayed, disliking school, caring for a family member, and working (Barton, 2005; Bridgeland et al., 2006).

#### *Student Preparedness*

Teachers and principals reported that students are unprepared for the demands of high school and this is a factor in students dropping out (Bridgeland, et al., 2009). The content area knowledge of the teacher and his or her ability to engage students deeply in lessons mattered when helping students persists towards graduation. Students who



attended middle schools where a significant number (20%) of teachers were not fully certified were less likely to graduate from high school than those students who attended middle schools that had a higher percentage of certified teachers (Silver, et al., 2008). Dropouts reported falling behind in elementary and middle school prior to getting to high school and found it difficult to catch up. Nearly one-half of the dropouts surveyed acknowledged that they were poorly prepared to attend high school but believed that additional interventions would have helped had they been available (Bridgeland, et al., 2006).

### *Freshman*

Previous studies of school dropouts have examined factors that contribute to the dropout rates among various at-risk groups. Demographic characteristics such as race, gender, age, and language status of first-time freshmen were found to influence persistence and graduation rates. It was noted that that the likelihood of dropping out of school was greatest for ninth graders and that pre-existing academic disengagement intensifies this occurrence. Although Asian and white students within a cohort were found most likely to graduate four years after entering high school, schools with high concentrations of LEP-classified students had much lower graduation rates (Silver, et al., 2008).

Bridges et al. (2008) surveyed focus groups of ninth grade students from 5 California high schools in order to hear their perspectives about factors that influence a student's decision to drop out. Most students (75%) said they liked coming to school for reasons that included the social aspect of schooling through peer support, and 81% saw the importance of getting a good education to fulfill future plans. Nearly 33% of the

students expressed a desire to finish college and more than half (58%) planned to finish graduate school. Bridges et al. determined that students' aspirations and expectations were significantly associated with their risk level of dropping out. Students highly at-risk of dropping out had lower ambitions for future educational goals and anticipated achieving future educational goals less often.

Ending social patterns such as working low-wage jobs, attaining low levels of education, and/or getting pregnant were motivating factors for some students to stay in school and graduate. In their study, Bridges et al. (2008) heard from one student who claimed that "there is a cycle that goes on, and the cycle is repeated here a lot. Unless you go to school, you end up either pregnant... or you make bad decisions and you get kicked out of school and you...end up struggling through life" (p. 16).

#### *Academic Performance*

Bridges et al. found that more than 90% of the freshman students surveyed said grades were important to them, citing that external rewards or negative consequences made it important at home and at school. Almost 40% of the students surveyed failed a class in their first semester and it was determined that some of the high schools had a higher pattern of course failure. Students reported that teacher-student relationships were strained when students experienced academic failure and lacked collaborative support to improve performance. According to Bridges et al., one student's description of this experience was "...they start getting bad grades and no one helps them, so they feel that they can't do anything. They don't want to deal with it-they can't do it-so they just drop out" (p. 14). Additionally, course failure impeded students' sense of belonging to the school community. Students reported that teaching approaches that influenced them

included techniques that made it easy for them to understand and in ways that made the content applicable (Bridges, et al., 2008).

### *Sense of Belonging*

Approximately 80% of the students surveyed expressed that extracurricular and co-curricular membership, such as sports teams and various clubs and organizations, increased their sense of belonging to the school community. Meeting membership eligibility requirements was often a motivator to do well in school academically. All of the students surveyed expressed that social support was an important reason for staying in school. A powerful motivator for students to do well and graduate was when their parents expressed concerns for them to be successful in school (Bridges, et al., 2008).

### *Teacher Empathy*

Many students reported that they had family responsibilities, such as caring for the household and family members, providing financial resources, or taking care of a child of their own. Students believed that some of these family responsibilities interfered with their school responsibilities. Students reported that they didn't feel that teachers were empathetic to their situation. According to Bridges et al. (2008) students repeatedly emphasized the need for schools to have caring adults who take time to listen and show concern for students prior to implementing solutions to student problems.

### *Ethnicity*

“The percentage of black and Latino students is increasing in the United States, and by 2023 the nation's students will be a minority majority” (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 6). Christle, et al. (2007), found that the ethnic background of the student body within a school was inversely related to the dropout rate; i.e., higher dropout rates correlated

with lower percentages of white students. On-time graduation rates of Latino and African American first-time freshmen were significantly lower. In all ethnic/racial groups, female students graduated at a higher rate than male students within the cohort. For the 16,383 Louisiana students who dropped out for the 2007 school year, 59.2% were male and 40.8% were female, 63.7% were African American students, 31.8% were Caucasian students, and 2.8% were Hispanic students, leaving 1.7% in the “Other” category (Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning, 2008).

### *Poverty*

The demographic of poverty and schools that fail to graduate students are highly correlated. Schools with high poverty and high dropout rates tended to employ administrators with fewer years of experience, an average of 4 years’ experience, compared to nine years’ experience for the low dropout schools (Christle et al., 2007). For the 2007 school year, 58% of the Louisiana students who dropped out were on either free or reduced lunch (Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning, 2008).

Results from a longitudinal study involving nearly 4,000 students determined that reading proficiency and poverty of elementary students are predictive of high school dropouts. By third grade, students who were not proficient readers were four times more likely to drop out and six times more likely to drop out if they were deficient in basic reading skills. Nearly one third of the students experiencing some family poverty had not achieved a high school diploma by age 19. Twenty-six percent of the students did not graduate if they were non proficient readers who experienced at least a year in poverty.

Black and Hispanic students from this same category experienced high rates, 31% and 33% respectively (Hernandez, 2011).

### *Gifted*

In a North Carolina study on the gifted dropout, it was determined that the gifted student dropped out for many of the same reasons as that of the average student. In fact, 71% of the sampled students who dropped out did so for reasons that related to attendance, discipline, or academic problems. Attendance problems ranked the highest (45%) for the gifted dropout in this study (Matthews, 2006).

### *Students with Disabilities*

In the 2005-2006 school year, among students with disabilities, the percentages of those exiting with a regular high school diploma varied. Those classified with mental retardation graduated at a rate of 37%. Forty-three percent were classified with emotional disturbance. Forty-four percent of those who exited had multiple disabilities. Sixty-two percent were students identified with a specific learning disability. The highest percentage of students who exited with a diploma were those with the disability of visual impairment at a rate of 72% (Planty et al., 2008).

Of the 16,383 Louisiana students who dropped out during the 2007 school year, over 21% were classified as students receiving special education services. Of those 3,514 special education students, 73.5% were males, 67.5% were African American, 65.9% were on free or reduced price lunch, and the grade level representing the largest percentage of dropouts (33.6%) was ninth grade (Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning, 2008).

*America's dropout crisis* goes well beyond having a sound accountability system that exposes the problem in our nation's schools and/or the demographic characteristics of those who drop out. According to Bridgeland et al. (2006), many recent dropouts believed they could have graduated and were doing reasonably well in school at the time they dropped. "The decision is personal, reflects their unique life circumstances, and is part of a slow process of disengagement from school" (p. 3).

### Typology of the Dropout

A dependable classification of student dropouts is necessary to match interventions and programs that meet the various needs of students who are at risk (Janosz, et al., 2000). Fortin, Marcotte, Potivin, Royer, and Joly (2006) developed a typology of students at risk of dropping out based on three contexts associated with drop out risks—the personal context, the family context, and the school context. The personal context considered deficits in the student's academic performance, behavior, social skills, and affect (presence of depression). The family context was a measurement of the social and environmental characteristics of the family life. Teacher attitudes and the social climate of the school were measures of the school context. Four subgroups of students were categorized: (1) the *Anti-Social Covert behavior* type; (2) the *Uninterested in school* type; (3) the *School and Social Adjustment Difficulties* type; and (4) the *Depressive* type (Fortin, Marcotte, Potivin, Royer, & Joly, 2006).

Students in the subgroup *Anti-Social Covert* behavior represented nearly 19% of the sample and were those who demonstrated somewhat below average academic success. Students were described by teachers in very positive ways and with no discipline problems. Analysis of student self-reported answers led researchers to

determine that students fit the definition of the antisocial covert behavior problems used to describe a type of juvenile behavior disorder by previous researchers. Students reported high levels of depression and low levels on family measures of cohesion, expression, organization, and emotional support. Family context was seen as troublesome and the classroom context was perceived as disorganized and lacking routines (Fortin et al., 2006).

Representing nearly 40% of the at-risk sample and having the lowest risk of dropping out were the students of the subgroup *Uninterested in School* type. Although students lacked motivation, they did perform well in school. Students reported being bored in school, frustrated with other students' disruptive behavior in class, and that the classroom context was lacking order and organization. This group had slightly higher levels of depression than the control group but very adequate social skills. Teachers felt very positively towards students and did not perceive them as being a behavior problem. Students perceived parents as slightly supportive emotionally (Fortin, et al., 2006).

The third subgroup, *School and Social Adjustment Difficulties* type represented just over 30% of the at-risk sample and had the highest risk of dropping out—approximately 33%. Students in this category had high levels of depression and the highest levels of disruptive behavior of the four groups. Academically, these students scored the lowest in mathematics and teachers felt very negatively towards these students. The students perceived the classroom context as having little order and organization. Family cohesion and control ranked higher for family measures for this subgroup of students (Fortin, et al., 2006).

The *Depressive* type had the lowest percent of students (10.7%) represented from the at-risk sample and had the least reported behavior problems. Teachers felt very positively about the students. Like the other groups, students perceived the classroom as having little order and organization. Unlike the other groups, these students had the highest levels of depression, the lowest levels on family measure, but reported parents to be the most controlling. Student in this group internalized their behavior and performed well academically (Fortin, et al., 2006).

Fortin et al. concluded that academic failure results from behavior problems that interfere with learning. Schools must be mindful that at-risk students who do not exhibit external behavior problems might miss out on appropriate interventions due to lack of awareness on the part of school personnel. Students who are at risk for dropping out report problems with family support and communication and a general lack of attention towards school and their future (Fortin, et al., 2006).

### Engagement Matters

Teenage years are a developmental phase marked by social, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional changes (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, & Pagani, 2009). Too many students are disengaged from the educational and social aspects of schooling (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008). Research indicates that student engagement is modifiable unlike other risk indicators, such as IQ or gender (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, et al., 2009) and that higher levels of engagement in school are connected to improved student performance (Klem & Connell, 2004). *Behavioral engagement* pertains to student involvement in academic, social, and extracurricular activities. *Emotional engagement* pertains to the student's feelings, values, and interests, as he or she reacts with school,



academics, teachers, and peers. *Cognitive engagement* pertains to the students psychologically investing themselves in learning, strategically and with effort (Fredericks, et al., 2004).

### *Engagement Trajectories of the Dropout*

Janosz et al. (2008) investigated various life paths of school engagement and their predictive relationship regarding whether students persist in high school or drop out of school. Their study generated seven different trajectories of school engagement with 12-to-16 year-old students sampled. The seven trajectories of school engagement classes determined are listed and described below: (a) Normative; (b) Stable Moderate; (c) Stable High; (d) Transitory Increasing; (e) Transitory Decreasing; (f) Decreasing; and (g) Increasing.

The first three trajectories mostly differ by their level of engagement, while the last four are differentiated by their characteristics and initial levels of school engagement. The *normative* trajectory was fairly stable (showing only slight decreases over time) and referred to the class of students that illustrated engagement for the majority of students sampled (53%). This path consisted of few students identified as receiving special education services or few students dropping out. Nearly twice as many of those who did drop out were female. Similar to the normative path, but with students illustrating lower levels of engagement, was the second class referred to as *stable moderate*. Male students on this trajectory represented 57% of this category. The *stable high* trajectory included the class of students with the highest and most persistent levels of school engagement, with twice as many students being female (Janosz, et al., 2008).

Each of the next four classes is considered *nonnormative* trajectories with unstable pathways for school engagement. These trajectories made up less than 5% of the total students sampled and included the majority of those students who dropped out. The *transitory increasing* class had students with varying levels of engagement as the age of the students increased. Beginning at age 12 school engagement was low, increasing to normative levels by age 14, and then exhibiting lower levels of engagement by age 16. This path had the second highest percentage of special needs students, at 26%, and had the highest percentage of sampled students who dropped out at 42%. The next engagement class of students consisted of those who were on the *transitory decreasing* trajectory. This group of students exhibited moderate levels of school engagement at age 12 but declined to the lowest levels of all students by age 14, and then by age 16 had recommitted to initial engagement levels. In this class, nearly all who dropped out were male students. Comprising 2% of the sample were those students who by age 12 had very high levels of school engagement but illustrated a rapid *decreasing* pattern over time. By age 16 this group had the lowest levels of school engagement and also had the highest percentage (33%) of students receiving special education services or who had dropped out. The *increasing* class of students consisted of 1% of the sample and was those who reported the lowest levels of engagement at age 12. Even though by age 16 school engagement for these students rapidly increased to levels nearing those on the stable high trajectory, 10% of this group still dropped out (Janosz, et al., 2008).

Janosz and colleagues (2008) determined that dropout risk is associated with unanticipated and unstable pathways of school engagement. Male students are more likely than female students to follow an unstable trajectory and drop out of school.

Except for the *decreasing trajectory*, lower levels of school engagement began during high school entry for the remaining unstable pathways.

Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, and Pagani (2009), studied the relationship between the trajectories of three distinct dimensions of student engagement - behavioral, affective, and cognitive and dropping out of high school. For the 13,330 students surveyed, subgroups of students were identified with quantitatively and qualitatively different paths using each characteristic of student engagement. In this model, 6 trajectory classes were determined: (a) *Normative*; (b) *Early Partially Declining*; (c) *Late Partially Declining*; (d) *Generally Inclining*; (e) *Transitory Partially Inclining*; and (f) *Early Generally Declining*. As in the previous study, the *normative* trajectory included the majority of students (64.6%), had more females than males, and was the most stable. Although engagement was fairly constant, students demonstrated a small and slow decline in the areas of behavioral and cognitive engagement. Behavioral engagement was most intense and affective engagement was the least intense (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, et al., 2009).

The *early partially declining* trajectory consisted of 12.2% of the students sampled and represented the first of the non-normative classes. Over 7% of the students in this class received special education services and nearly 5% of the students dropped out. Behavioral engagement was marked by early rapid decline between the ages of 12 and 14. While cognitive engagement also decreased, affective engagement for these students remained stable. At age 12, students on the *late partially declining* trajectory demonstrated greater levels of behavioral engagement (in particular, male students) but showed lower levels of affective and cognitive engagement. Beyond age 13 their

behavioral engagement declined, with all three dimensions of engagement being low by age 16. This class had the highest dropout rate at 11.2%; 63.8% of those dropouts were male students. This class registered a large proportion of students (10.5%) enrolled in special education services. The *late generally inclining* trajectory was marked by stable cognitive engagement and increasing affective and behavioral engagement (from ages 13 to 14). Eight percent of the students received special education services. On this path, 6.1% of the students dropped out; 65.2% of those were female. The *transitory partially inclining* trajectory consisted of students who at age 12 had low cognitive and affective engagement, increasing as they got older, but then decreasing again by age 16. Behavioral engagement remained constant and stable over time. Over 7% of the students dropped out from this class and 6.9% of the class received special education services. The *early generally declining* trajectory had students with the highest levels of engagement on all three dimensions initially, but sharp decreases occurred in all three areas between ages 12 and 14. Of all of the paths, this class had the sharpest declines in cognitive and affective engagement with some increase after age 15. This class was noted for the lowest percentage of dropouts (3.9%) but the highest percentage of students receiving special education services (10.8%) (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, et al., 2009).

The results of this study indicate that one-third of the students participating experienced disengagement, with behavior being the most cause for concern after age 13. Archambault and colleagues suggest that school-based interventions that emphasize school completion should promote the mental health and well-being of students based on their individual differences. In spite of behavioral disengagement, the risk that a student

may drop out increases when they experience disconnectedness in multiple areas of school life (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, et al., 2009).

### *School Connectedness*

Libbey (2004) concluded that common terms used by researchers in the health and education literature to define school connectedness were school engagement, school attachment, school bonding, school climate, school involvement, teacher support, and school connectedness. Consistent themes emerged into nine important constructs: (1) academic engagement; (2) belonging; (3) discipline/fairness; (4) likes school; (5) student voice; (6) extracurricular activities; (7) peer relations; (8) safety; and (9) teacher support (Libbey, 2004, p. 278).

According to Libbey, academic engagement measures the degree to which students are motivated to learn and do well in school. Belonging included items measured such as school pride, feelings of respect, activity involvement, being oneself, feeling like one is a part of the school, being able to talk to teachers, and believing the school was a place where adults are interested in the students. Measuring school discipline and fairness included items pertaining to the strictness of the principal and school staff, the fairness of rules being enforced for all groups of students, and consistency of school's discipline. The degree to which students liked their school was a common construct found in a number of the variables. Researchers measured items such as student satisfaction, as well as, student moods, enthusiasm, and enjoyment while attending their school. Student voice was measured by opportunities to share ideas with the principal and make decisions about school issues as well as teachers listening to student suggestions and designing independent projects. Participating in non-academic

activities was a measure of school belonging. Peer relations included measures of whether students had friends, feelings of loneliness, and other students who liked them. Safety measured the degree to which students reported feeling safe at school. The most common theme among the variables reviewed included teacher support. Teacher support measured items such as students feeling close to, liked by, and valued by the adults in the school; feeling that help would be provided for student problems; caring about what teachers think and receiving praise from teachers; feeling comfortable talking to teachers, and believing that the teachers of the school are doing a good job (Libbey, 2004).

### *Engagement Thresholds*

*Ongoing Engagement* and *Reaction to Challenge* were two components of student adjustment in school used by Klem and Connell in their 2004 study. Ongoing engagement included measures such as schoolwork effort, preparing for and paying attention in class, and believing in the importance of doing well in school. Reaction to challenge included measures of the various ways students handle and react to negative school-related circumstances. Klem and Connell established optimal and risk thresholds for student engagement for achievement and behavior risk levels in elementary and secondary school settings. Optimal attendance rates for elementary students were determined to be 97% or higher while at the secondary level it was set at a minimum of 93%. Engagement risk levels for attendance of students who participated in the study were rated below 89% for elementary students and 79% for secondary students.

Results from the Klem and Connell study indicated that 35% of elementary and 31% of middle school students attained risk levels on engagement and were disengaged from school. Twenty-seven percent of the elementary students reached optimal

thresholds of engagement but only 14% of middle school students did so. When teachers reported on student engagement, 22% of the elementary and 19% of the middle school students were determined to be in the optimal categories. In contrast, teachers determined that 40% of elementary and 17% of middle school students exhibited disengaging behaviors.

### *Student Engagement*

Harris (2008) identified six different conceptions held by secondary school teachers about what they believed student engagement in learning to be. These included (a) participating in classroom activities and following school rules; (b) being interested in and enjoying what happens at school; (c) being motivated and confident to participate in what happens at school; (d) being involved in thinking; (e) purposefully learning to reach life goals; and (f) owning and valuing learning (p. 65). When working with students at-risk of dropping out, it is important that teachers develop a common understanding of what student engagement is and its relationship to student persistence towards graduation.

Klem and Connell (2004) determined that students who see teachers as having high but fair expectations and creating a well-structured and caring learning environment are more likely to report being engaged in school. Elementary students were twice as likely to be disengaged and middle school students were 68% more likely to be disengaged when low levels of teacher support were reported. According to Schlechty (2011), the main difference between a student who is engaged in learning and one who is not is the manner in which they associate with the work expected of them. He distinguishes student on-task behavior from student engagement in that a student on task gives his or her attention to the task but may not persist or value the meaning of the task.

When responding to learning tasks expected of them, students may respond in one of five ways: (a) Engagement; (b) Strategic Compliance; (c) Ritual compliance; (d) Retreatism; or (e) Rebellion (p. 16). In a “highly engaged” classroom, most students respond to the work with indicators of engagement most of the time. But even in a highly engaged classroom, some students may exhibit some levels of strategic compliance, ritual compliance, or possibly minimal amounts of retreatism (Schlechty, 2011).

### Disengagement

#### *Social Relations*

Vitaro, Larocque, Janosz, and Tremblay (2001) followed a sample of 751 low socioeconomic male students to determine whether peer-related variables (i.e. unpopularity/friendlessness and association with deviant friends) predicted early or late school dropout, after controlling for early disruptiveness, academic problems and socio-familial variables. The students ranged in age from 6 (kindergarten) through the typical age for graduation, 17 years of age. Results indicate that socio-family adversity is linked to dropping out, disruptiveness predicted early school withdrawal, and early academic performance predicted early and late dropping out. Additionally, the lack of classroom friends and being unpopular with classmates did not contribute to dropping out. Students who associated with deviant friends were likely to be disengaged from school and developed adverse attitudes towards academic achievement. “It is clear from the present findings that dropping out of school can be predicted by early behavioral dispositions and academic performance and that some social processes (i.e. association with deviant peers) contribute to this process” (Vitaro, Larocque, Janosz, & Tremblay, 2001, p. 413).



### *School attendance*

Poor attendance is a sign of students detaching from school and a measure of disengagement that could lead to the student dropping out. “Forty-five percent of teachers and 42 percent of principals cited excessive absenteeism as a key factor in most cases of dropout” (Bridgeland, et al., 2009, p. 20). This was in close alignment with student responses as well. Forty-three percent of the students surveyed said they could not get back on track after missing too many days of school, and a majority of the dropouts responded that they had missed too many days the year before (Bridgeland, et al., 2006).

Students who drop out have a long history of chronic detachment that begins early on in their school career. Researchers found those students in a California cohort who dropped out of high school had twice as many absences (14 days compared to 7 days) on average during their seventh and eighth grade year compared to those who actually graduated. During seventh, eighth, or ninth grades, students who averaged less than five days of absences graduated at rates of 65% to 69%; between 10 to 20 days of absences, students graduated at a rate of 40%; and those with more than 20 days of absences, had only a 17% to 24% chance of graduating (Silver, et al., 2008). Kemp (2006) found that absenteeism was a more serious problem for students without disabilities than for students with disabilities that led to the student dropping out. In addition to absences, Suh, et al. (2007) found that the number of schools a student attends is also predictive of a student dropping out.

Student dropouts who were disengaged from school and habitually absent often developed a pattern, with each absence making them less willing to commit to school

norms. Respondents cited that failing to wake up and attend, skipping classes once at school, and/or taking extended lunches as reasons they missed school (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). In the 2006-2007 school year, approximately 42,500 Louisiana students (6% of the total student population) were absent on any given school day (Louisiana Department of Education, 2007; Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning, 2008).

### *Discipline*

Students, who “disconnect from a school’s norms and expectations,” often have higher incidences of undesirable behavior that result in disciplinary infractions. School personnel are seeing more and more children usually referred to as “oppositional-defiant, antisocial, conduct disordered, or severely emotionally disturbed” usually exhibiting behavior that includes not following directions and/or defiant and aggressive behavior. (Hall & Hall, 2003, p. 1). According to Hall and Hall (2003), there are three risk factors that put children at risk for developing oppositional-defiant behaviors: (a) an inherent difficult temperament; (b) parents with marginal skills at disciplining and nurturing; and (c) parents under excessive stress (p. 8). A correlation was found to exist in school violations and the student dropout rate. Often a cycle of academic failure and disengagement is perpetuated when students are excessively absent due to out-of-school suspensions (Christle, et al., 2007).

Student dropouts who violated school expectations reported that there were many opportunities that often led them to cut class or leave campus. “Thirty-eight percent believed they had ‘too much freedom’ and not enough rules” (Bridgeland, et al., 2006, p. 8). This freedom was the result of parents being less involved in their schooling. Of the student dropouts interviewed, 59% stated their parents or guardians were involved, with

half being involved mainly for discipline reasons. Sixty-two percent of the student dropouts interviewed expressed that tighter classroom discipline was needed and more than half stated that schools could do more to help students feel safe (Bridgeland; et al., 2006).

For the school years 2001-2006 in Louisiana schools, out-of-school expulsion rates ranged from 1.71% to 2.1%. These percentages were based on expellable offenses that range from 14,465 offenses to 17,308 offenses. Nearly 50% of the offenses counted each year were for infractions receiving an out-of-school suspension. This entailed over 400,000 offenses that received an out-of-school suspension (Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning, 2008). For the 2006-2007 school year, nearly 85,500 students (12%) in Louisiana had at least one in-school suspension and nearly that many had at least one out-of-school suspension (Louisiana Department of Education, 2007).

#### *Academic failure*

Some dropouts leave school because of academic challenges. Students who disengage from the learning environment begin by “reducing effort and involvement at school” which can later lead to course failure. Bridgeland et al. (2006) found that 30% of those students who had dropped out stated it was difficult to maintain their school-work, and 35% said that “failing in school” was a major factor in their decision (p. 7).

In the California Dropout Research Project, course failure during the middle school years was highly associated with students in the cohort not graduating from high school. Sixty-nine percent of the sample group, who never failed a middle school class, graduated on time and those who did not graduate failed four times as many middle

school classes. During the high school years, course failure was experienced by most members (77%) of the cohort. Failing just one high school course was found to reduce the chance of graduating to 64%, with each additional failure decreasing the graduation rate by 10% (Silver, et al., 2008).

The two major reasons cited by dropouts with high GPAs related to disengagement were boredom and spending time with others who were disinterested in school. Nearly half (47%) said classes were not interesting and 42% had friends who were not interested in school (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). In comparison, teachers and principals did not see boredom as a primary reason why students drop out of school. In fact, many teachers tend to believe that students are making excuses when boredom is cited as a reason for leaving. On the other hand, principals connected student boredom to the quality of the teacher in the classroom and interpreted it as students expressing their interest in having teachers who love what they teach and are creative in their delivery (Bridgeland et al., 2009).

Students recognize the important role that schools play in helping them remain engaged in the learning environment. Those who had dropped out voiced concern that their school was not doing enough to help when they had trouble learning. Results indicated that: (a) nearly 70% were not motivated or inspired to work hard; (b) 80% did one hour or less of homework each day in high school; (c) two-thirds would have worked harder if more was demanded of them; and (d) 70% were confident they could have graduated if they had tried (Bridgeland, et al., 2006, pp. 4-5).

Fifty-five percent of the student dropouts interviewed believed more help should be provided to students identified with problems in learning. Seventy percent believed

that extra help such as tutoring, summer school, and more time with their teacher would have helped them succeed and remain on the graduation path (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). The efforts of a caring adult can have greater positive outcomes when working with at-risk students than do academic support or counseling programs (Knesting, 2008).

### *Retention*

Bridgeland et al. (2006) found that of those who had dropped out, 32% stated they had been required to repeat a grade, and nearly that many (29%) were doubtful that, even with diligent effort, they could have met graduation requirements. Based on 2006-2007 data, 53,309 k-12 students in Louisiana were retained in their grades, representing 8% of the population (Louisiana Department of Education, 2007). For the 2003-04 school year through the 2006-07 school year, the k-12 retention rates for these years ranged from a high of 9.8% in 2003-04 school year to the low of 8.4% for the 2006-07 school year. Grades 4 and 8 had some of the highest retention rates, but with signs of improvement. Grade 4 retention rates ranged from a high of 18.1% in the 2004-05 school year and a low of 8.1% in the 2006-07 school year. Grade 8 retention rates ranged from a 17.9% for the 2003-04 school year and a low of 8.8% in the 2006-07 school year (Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning, 2008).

### *Schools That Are Disengaging*

Teachers and principals hold strong beliefs about the effort they think those most at risk are willing to extend to learning. Most teachers (75%) and principals (66%) felt that students would not work harder to meet higher standards even if it were demanded of them (Bridgeland, et al., 2009). Christle et al. (2007) found that achievement test scores

and grade retention rates distinguished schools with high dropout rates from those with low dropout rates.

For the 2007-2008 school year, nearly twice as many Louisiana students were retained in lower performing schools (12%) versus higher performing schools at 6%. A similar pattern was true for dropout rates. Lower performing schools had a dropout rate of 6%, while higher performing schools had a dropout rate of 3% (Louisiana Department of Education, 2008).

### Predicting Those Who Drop Out

Instead of identifying at-risk students solely on demographic characteristics, researchers are now using indicators of disengagement as a means of detecting those in danger of dropping out. Signs that students are at an increased risk of dropping out are evident in their school records, school academic performance, and their behavior in the early elementary years of schooling. Warning signs include low grades, skipping classes, tardiness, and generally uncooperative conduct (Barton, 2005). A high percentage of prospective dropouts already indicate personal, social, or family challenges as early as seventh grade (Janosz, et al., 2008). Pinkus (2008) defines high yield indicators for student dropouts as “collectively, they indentify a significant portion of future dropouts and identify students who – absent intervention – have very low odds of graduating” (p. 3).

The decision to dropout is a “complex social problem for which there is no simple solution” (Christle, et al., 2007, p. 334). Students who exhibit high levels of anxiety early in elementary school are more likely to drop out of high school. Duchense, Vitaro, Larose, and Tremblay (2008) found that anxiety symptoms can be observed in children as

early as kindergarten and can be a predictor of students' persistence towards high school completion. While anxiety symptoms fluctuated during kindergarten through sixth grade, the difference between those who experienced high levels of anxiety versus those experiencing low levels was constant through sixth grade. It was determined that "compared to the moderately anxious group, young people belonging to the High or Chronic groups have a higher risk of not completing high school, above and beyond familial (sociofamilial adversity) and personal (gender, classroom behaviors, and academic achievement) characteristics" (Duchense, Vitaro, Larose, & Tremblay, 2008, p. 1143).

The Consortium on Chicago School Research developed the *on-track indicator* which tracks credits earned and the number of F's in core courses for students within their first year of high school and has since become a part of the accountability system for the Chicago public high schools. A student is on-track at the end of their freshman year if the student has accumulated enough credits to be promoted to the tenth grade and no more than one semester F in a core subject area (English, math, science, or social studies). It was determined that for the 2003-04 freshman cohort, 40% were off-track by these two indicators. Of those who entered with very high 8<sup>th</sup> grade test scores (in the top quarter of their class), almost one-quarter were off-track by the end of their freshman year suggesting that the transition to high school requires additional skills to meet the academic, social, and behavioral demands placed on students (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).

*Academic Achievement*

In one study using the 1999 cohort freshman class, 81% of the students designated as on-track at the end of their freshman year graduated from high school. Only 22% of the students designated as off-track at the end of their freshman year graduated in four years. For the freshman class of 2000, only 40% of students with exactly the number of credits to be a sophomore (5 credits) graduated in four years. More than 70% of students who earned six credits graduated in four years, and of those who earned 7 or more credits, 85% of them graduated on time. The number of core courses failed was very predictive of who actually graduated. Eighty-three percent of those students who did not fail a core course during their freshman year graduated within four years. The graduation rate dropped by more than 20% for those receiving just one F for a semester core course. Only 44% of the students receiving a second F for a semester core course graduated and less than one-third graduated in four years who earned three or more semester F's (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).

The chances of students being on track at the end of the freshman year depended upon the climate and structure of the school attended. On-track differences with schools ranged from rates just over 30% to those exceeding 90%. Most schools (75%) had between 47% and 77% of their students on track by the end of their freshman year. Even after accounting for differences in elementary school achievement, race/ethnicity, gender, economic status, and age upon entering high school, the relationship between being on-track and graduating remained a very strong one (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).

In a recent study of nine predictive variables pertaining to roughly 13,000 sixth graders in the Philadelphia school system, researchers found that 60% of the students



who would not graduate within one year of their expected graduation date were accurately identified. Course failure in math or English was a better indicator of not graduating than low test scores. When attendance fell below 80%, 75% or more of those students did not graduate. Only 20% who received one or more suspensions in the sixth grade graduated within a year of on-time graduation (Balfanz, et al., 2007).

### *School Attendance*

School attendance was found to be a strong indicator of dropping out second only to academic achievement. Missing more than 10% of instruction during sixth grade increased the likelihood that a student would drop out (Balfanz, et al., 2007). Students who established an attachment to school by feeling connected and belonging are less likely to drop out of school (Christle, et al., 2007).

### Dropout Prevention and Intervention

According to Reeves, school leaders must filter the many decisions they make through two questions: “What is the extent of my ability to influence this action?” and “What impact will this action have on the student learning results I am seeking to achieve?” (2011c, p. 52). School personnel do not have direct control over student demographics, family history, or even community problems that influence student disengagement and eventual drop out. However, high schools can become student-centered learning environments that create a climate that encourages at-risk students to persist. Schools can become personalized when the adults make personal connections with every student through classes and school activities (Edwards & Edwards, 2007).

“Capacity has to do with what a person, group, or organization is capable of doing if called on to act” (Schlechty, 2011, p. 167). Knesting (2008) found that dropout

prevention often played a secondary role in other efforts such as guidance counseling or transition efforts of the type found in ninth grade academies. Principals reported that the most frequently used dropout prevention strategies in their schools were career awareness, counseling, and vocational education/technical training (Kemp, 2006). While these strategies are important, schools need to have a well developed stand-alone dropout prevention plan with a comprehensive focus.

Developing strategies that help students become resilient learners takes into account the whole child and includes school and community concerns. The *KIDS COUNT Indicator Brief* list four strategies for reducing the dropout rate: (a) Adopt a long-term approach that begins with strengthening school readiness; (b) Enhance the holding power of schools, with an intensive focus on the ninth grade; (c) Address the needs of those groups with the highest risk of dropping out; and (d) Build on the skills and understanding of the adults who affect teens' motivation and ability to stay in school (Shore & Shore, 2009, p. 2).

### *Resiliency*

According to Oswald et al. (2003), resilience in children is “that capacity to successfully overcome personal vulnerabilities and environmental stressors, to be able to ‘bounce back’ in the face of potential risks and to maintain well-being” (p. 50). It is a multi-faceted construct with fluid attributes that is influenced by a person's context over time. Resilience is established by the existence of one or more protective factors in a child's life (Oswald, et al., 2003). In her analysis of the concept of resilience, Earvolino-Ramirez (2007) identified 28 different protective factors that resilience researchers used in their studies. Five of those listed appeared in all six of the author's work under

analysis: (a) positive relationships; (b) sense of personal worthiness; (c) strong self-efficacy beliefs; (d) sense of humor; and (e) high expectations. Adversity, usually in the form of challenges, changes, or disruptions, is the key antecedent setting the stage for resiliency to occur. The results of a person's resilience are effective coping, mastery, and positive adaptation (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007).

### *Classroom Resilience*

Downey (2008) compiled 12 recommendations for classroom practices and instruction that promote educational resilience for students who are at risk of failing academically. These 12 recommendations are clustered into four categories and are as follows: Teachers can develop rapport with their students by (a) building healthy interpersonal relationships; (b) setting and communicating high, realistic expectations for academic performance; and (c) using students' strengths to promote high self-esteem. Teachers can improve the classroom climate by (a) reminding students that they are personally responsible for their own success; (b) engaging in strategies that develop a meaningful caring community; (c) providing opportunities for meaningful participation; and (d) setting clear and consistent expectations of students' behaviors. Teachers can use instructional strategies that promote cooperative learning and encourage students to tutor others. And the last cluster of recommendations involves the teacher (a) teaching students transferable life skills; (b) encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities; and (c) emphasizing effective literacy skills (Downey, 2008).

### *Social Relationships and Resiliency*

In a study by Langenkamp (2010), middle school social relationships were found to be a factor in the academic resilience of students transitioning to high school. Students

with many friendships were less likely than those with few friendships to be placed in lower-level math courses and less likely to experience course failure in their first year of high school. Additionally, students who had a strong bond with their middle school teachers had fewer course failures at the end of their first year of high school. According to Langenkamp, this was probably because students had the skills set to develop new but similar relationships that helped to prevent this course failure. However, low-achieving students with many friendships were more likely to be placed in lower-level math courses and experience more frequent course failures.

The district's feeder school configuration, multiple feeder schools versus a single feeder school, impacts the social relationships of students transitioning into high school. Those districts where multiple middle schools fed into a single high school provided more social and academic opportunities for students and had a lower proportion of students failing courses in their first year of high school. This resilience benefit was especially true for low-achieving students transitioning to high schools that had a combination of middle schools feeder schools (Langenkamp, 2010).

The context of the high school in which students attend plays an important role in whether or not students persist towards completion. Knesting and Walden (2006) found the perspectives of high school students who were resilient illustrated three factors that are interactive with each other and support student persistence: (a) goal orientation; (b) willingness to play the game; and (c) meaningful connections with teachers. They concluded that "school persistence is a continuous process" for students during high school (p. 603).

## Creating Engaging Schools

Christle et al. (2007) found that high schools with the lowest dropout rates offered courses and sponsored clubs and organizations that met the needs and interests of their students. An overwhelming number (81%) of student dropouts interviewed said real-world and experiential learning that leads to getting a good job was missing from their school experience (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). Providing interventions to struggling students early in the student's high school career is important in order to help students remain on track for graduation. A student on track by the end of their freshman year was three and a half times more likely to graduate within four years than one who was off track (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). In addition to reducing dropouts, early intervention strategies that eliminate social separation and/or rejection in the middle school years might also help in problem areas, such as school violence and drug abuse (Janosz, et al, 2008).

Barton (2005) claims that there are insufficient personnel providing guidance and counseling services to students at risk of dropping out and their families. On average, there is one school certified counselor for every 285 high school students. The ratio is higher in schools where more than half of the students are not planning to go to college or in schools where there is a high proportion of minority students. Counselors spend much of the time advising students who are college bound, raising student achievement for those who are in school and will stay in school, and administering testing duties. This inhibits them from working closely with community agencies and businesses and providing career guidance or transition-to-work services that help keep at-risk students engaged in the school's learning environment (Barton, 2005).

Students need support from caring adults to make meaning of their life experiences, and often this can be provided through academic and school related experiences (Hupfeld, p. 2). School experiences that provide learning opportunities to engage students include:

1. Strong alternative schools, which address diverse learning styles.
2. Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes that lead to good jobs immediately after or during high school.
3. Community-based learning experiences that offer (a) academically based community service; (b) civic education; (c) environmental education; (d) place-based learning; (e) service learning; and (f) work-based learning.
4. Opportunities for students to get back on track by participating in credit retrieval programs (Baker Evaluation, Research, and Consulting, Inc., p. 14).

In schools with low dropout rates, teachers took a personal interest in the success of their students, held high academic expectations of them, and provided additional support to meet the expectations (Christle, et al., 2007). Students who dropped out expressed the importance of a good teacher who can provide academic support. Eighty-one percent stated they wanted better teachers and 75% expressed the need for smaller class sizes so that the teacher could help them individually with instruction (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). In low-dropout schools, it was evident that students who were at risk for dropping out were identified by school personnel, provided targeted interventions, and monitored for progress. Positive relationships were high priorities and administrators were supportive of teachers' needs to get the job done (Christle, et al., 2007).

*Making Learning Profound*

Five distinguishing practices were found to be common among the leaders and teachers in schools where high minority high poverty students demonstrated proficient achievement. These practices are (a) a sharp focus on academic achievement; (b) a choice of curriculum that emphasizes reading, writing, and mathematics; (c) frequent monitoring of student performance and several chances for improvement; (d) an emphasis on nonfiction writing; and (e) collaborative scoring of student work (Reeves, 2000a). Dufour and Marzano (2011) advocate creating a results-oriented school culture, using the process of a professional learning community (PLC), where continuous improvement for adult practices occurs as part of one coherent strategy to improve the school. For example, student scores in reading were significantly influenced when faculty and staff demonstrated high levels focus and monitoring on this as a collect priority (Reeves, 2011c). The PLC process involves “organizing staff into meaningful collaborative teams, establishing a guaranteed curriculum, creating common formative assessments, analyzing evidence of student learning to improve adult practice, and creating systems of intervention and enrichment” (p. 40-41). The adults participating in the PLC process are committed to increasing the collective capacity of the entire faculty in order to experience their collective purpose and meet the priorities of their school (Dufour & Marzano, 2011).

According to Schlechty (2011) there are four indicators always present when a student is engaged in work expected of them: (a) the student is attentive and task focused; (b) the student voluntarily commits his or her time, attention, and effort to activities required by the tasks; (c) the student is persistent in spite of challenges present and does

not compromise personal standards of their work; and (d) the student finds meaning and value in the tasks as it applies to the motives they bring to the work.

According to Schlechty (2011), there are at least two types of academic learning: superficial learning and profound learning. *Superficial learning* is limited to the facts, definition, and skills requiring short-term memory and is not transferable like that experienced with *profound learning*. Profound learning shapes the students' global thinking and requires them to persist until satisfactorily completed, evaluate facts, and use knowledge and skills to create meaning in new settings. Creating engaging conditions in the classroom is not the only way for students to learn. Classroom conditions that rely on extrinsic rewards and negative consequences can also result in learning but will probably result in superficial learning rather than profound learning.

#### *Teachers as Designers of Engaging Academic Conditions*

One of the primary beliefs in Schlechty's *Working on the Work* framework is that teachers are "designers" of engaging work for students and are facilitators of the conditions necessary to complete that work. He distinguishes the traditional role of planning with that of designing with these characteristics:

1. Design begins with the customers (students) and the needs of the customers. Planning begins with goals, objectives, programs of actions, and activities.
2. Design assumes divergence, disruption, and chaos. Planning assumes convergence, linearity, and order.
3. Design is expressive and embraces values and emotions. Planning is instrumental and embraces deductive logic and rational analysis.



4. Design is controlled by principles, product specifications, client values, and client response. Planning is controlled by rules, procedures, goals, and predetermined results.
5. Design emphasizes divergent thinking. Planning emphasizes convergent thinking.
6. Design seeks alternatives and invites invention. Planning seeks to limit alternatives and encourages conformance to rules, time lines, and codified procedures.
7. Designers synthesize and unify. Planners analyze and segment (Schlechty, 2011, p. 48).

To guide their work as designers, Schlechty provides ten Design Qualities for teachers to consider when creating engaging work for students: (a) The work is product focused; (b) The work has content and substance that students want to do; (c) The work is organized around knowledge that appeals to the motives of the student; (d) The work provides directions meeting clear and compelling standards for what good work looks like; (e) The work encourages students to do their best by providing protection from adverse consequences when students fail to meet the standards the first time; (f) The work attends to the student's need of affiliation by providing an opportunity to work with others; (g) The work provides the student with affirmation about the quality and contribution of their work; (h) The work provides an opportunity to express novelty and variety; (i) The work provides students a choice in how to demonstrate their learning; and (j) The work encourages authenticity by giving students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning in culturally meaningful ways (Schlechty, 2011).

### *Responding with Interventions*

Dropout prevention resources and interventions are available in many schools and districts but are not well coordinated or systematically applied (Therriault, Heppen, O’Cummings, Freyer, & Johnson, 2010). The greatest challenge facing states for students with disabilities is the capacity to use longitudinal data effectively to monitor for early warning indicators, to inform instructional approaches and student interventions, as well as for compliance with federal law (National High School Center, 2007). Dropout prevention strategies for all students should be differentiated based on the student’s at-risk indication (Janosz, et al., 2008; Suh, et al., 2007). Dufour and Marzano (2011) recommend that schools attempting to create a systematic plan to respond to students’ learning difficulties should provide all students with effective instruction daily, be proactive rather than reactive, make available assessment information frequently and in a timely manner to multiple people, give students multiple opportunities for support in learning, direct students to the interventions, be flexible, specific, and precise regarding the needs of individual students, and be systematic and embedded in a culture of high expectations, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) passed in 2004, required school systems to develop a proactive approach to responding to all students who are experiencing academic and behavioral problems in school. This proactive approach, called response to intervention (RTI), includes rigorous instruction for all students, initial screening for academic and behavioral concerns, a tiered systems of academic and behavioral intervention strategies when needed, and progress monitoring of student learning toward desired goals (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). To organize

resources and strategies, schools and districts are using a three phase approach with tiers based on the intensity of the interventions. The first phase, often referred to as Tier I (Universal) interventions, uses curricula to teach social skills for appropriate behavior and academic expectations that all students are expected to meet at school. Tier II (Secondary) interventions are moderately intensive interventions provided to students who display difficult behavior that inhibits academic and social success. These interventions are used with small groups of students (sometimes individuals) with common behavior and/or academic deficits. The third phase of interventions, Tier III (Tertiary), are provided to individual students requiring the most intensive and specialized interventions because of their highest level of need for help in addressing chronic academic and behavioral difficulties. This model can be used for instructional, behavioral interventions, and dropout prevention interventions (Louisiana School-to-Prison Reform Coalition, 2009; Therriault, et al., 2010).

The three phases of a dropout prevention plan should strategically address student disengagement. Most of the disengaging behavior (poor attendance, poor academics, and poor behavior) should be addressed using school-wide strategies with the goal of engaging students and preventing at least 75% of the problems that would occur school-wide (Balfanz, et al., 2007). The purposes of these school-wide strategies include addressing student progress and motivation at critical points along the high school path. Strategies with built-in check points that help the students develop accountability for success include but are not limited to (a) personalized graduation plans processes; (b) various ninth-grade transition strategies; and (c) strong behavior and attendance policies (Pinkus, 2008, p. 7).

The second phase of prevention should target 15-20% of the disengaging behavior using strategies that go above and beyond school-wide strategies and involves efforts from a caring adult mentor. The purposes of the interventions in this category address a group of individuals who do not respond to general school-wide strategies, show clear signs of risk, and share a particular risk factor. Implementation should ensure that group strategies continue to match the individual students' academic challenges. Targeted interventions that are proven to work include: (a) daily attendance check-ins; (b) behavior contracts and checklists brought to each class; and/or (c) extra-help courses (Louisiana School-to-Prison Reform Coalition, 2009; Pinkus, 2008, p. 8).

The third phase requires a more intensive approach to the disengaging behavior and involves working with personnel trained to meet the needs of students demonstrating 5-10% of the most disengaging behaviors (Balfanz, et al., 2007). Students in this category need intensive interventions to re-engage in the school environment. Functional Behavioral Assessments are conducted to better understand the function of a student's chronic behavior and develop an intervention plan to provide specialized support in order to prevent it from continuing (Louisiana School-to-Prison Reform Coalition, 2009). Examples of such interventions include one-on-one support such as (a) individual mentoring; (b) academic tutoring; (c) behavior contracts; and/or (d) counseling services provided by social workers or psychologists (Louisiana School-to-Prison Reform Coalition, 2009; Pinkus, 2008, p. 8).

#### *Discipline Solutions in Louisiana*

In Louisiana, school discipline impacts the decision to stay in school for both teachers and students. One cost-effective research-based program used to decrease

discipline problems and increase graduation rates across Louisiana schools is Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS). School personnel are trained in PBIS, use data to design targeted interventions, and monitor student data for effectiveness.

Discipline measures that adversely affect student achievement are suspension rates and expulsion rates (Louisiana School-to-Prison Reform Coalition, 2009).

In an effort to help school personnel cope with discipline problems, Louisiana state law requires districts to have a model master plan for creating a safe and productive school climate by improving discipline in various areas within the school. This plan should include various effective classroom management procedures that use positive behavior support. Creating such a climate requires school personnel to teach significant social skills needed for successful behavior competence. “PBS schools set clear expectations for behavior, acknowledge and reward appropriate behavior, and implement a consistent continuum of consequences for problem behavior” (Louisiana School-to-Prison Reform Coalition, 2009, p. 8).

### *The Principal's Role*

“Change can be started at the level of the school or the school district, but in the long run, it will not matter unless it affects every classroom” (Schlechty, 2011, p. 139). In an examination of leadership initiatives in more than 2,000 schools, Reeves found that educational leaders and policy makers mandated too many policies, procedures, and practices without the appropriate commitment to time and resources necessary for successful implementation. *Initiative fatigue*, as he refers to it, was found to reduce the leadership focus necessary to influence student achievement (Reeves, 2011c). There is a

relationship between the effectiveness of schools and personnel and the decision for students to drop out of school (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009).

The school principal is the key person in seeing that a strategic focus on dropout prevention takes shape with the internal and external school communities. Leadership focus has the following attributes—impact, leverage, and implementation—and was found to positively impact student achievement when leaders identified and monitored no more than six instructional priorities linked to student needs (Reeves, 2011c). Seventy-one percent of the student dropouts surveyed expressed that dropout prevention required more parent involvement and better communication between the parents and the school. Less than half said home contact was made either when they were absent or after they had dropped out (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). Knowing the demographics of children from high-risk groups and assessing risk factors must be a primary task facilitated by school principals. The dropout rate can be reduced by focusing on these Seven Key Principles: (a) early identification; (b) close examination of new and existing school policies and procedures; (c) building strong community partnerships and personalizing the school; (d) reducing social isolation; (e) managing student transitions; (f) creating options and implementing creative interventions; and (g) building parent/family relationships (Edwards & Edwards, 2007, p. 9).

The more skilled the principal is in school leadership, the more learning and positive effects on student achievement can be expected from students (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). In order for principals to lead others in creating an engagement-focused school, they must be clear about transforming the school from a bureaucratic organization into a learning organization. To transform into a learning organization, the principal can

begin by creating a building level design team and providing support in the form of time, encouragement, and training necessary to become leaders within the school. The primary focus of the design team is to examine the current conditions of schooling, create a new engagement-focused vision, and sustain efforts that lead to more engaging work for students (Schlechty, 2011).

Teachers who believe that all students can succeed are successful when working with at-risk students. From the students' perspectives, teachers who communicate respect to students, hold high academic expectations, challenge each student appropriately, and provide a safe climate were found to have influenced students' decision to persist towards graduation (Knesting, 2008). Principals can assign adults to work with students at risk of dropping out. In one study, student dropouts interviewed expressed concerns about having an adult to talk with about their problems. Only 56% said they could go to a staff person for school problems, and 41% were able to identify someone in the school to talk to about personal problems (Bridgeland, et al., 2006).

### *Relationship Building*

Frequent positive emotions while at school were associated with increased levels of student engagement, while negative emotions were associated with lower levels of engagement (Reschly, Huebner, Appleton, & Antaramian, 2008). One such intervention known for its positive results in helping reduce the dropout rates for students with disabilities is the *Check and Connect* program. Using *off-track* indicators (i.e. course failures, tardiness, skipping classes, absenteeism, detentions and suspensions), the program identifies students at risk of dropping out and connects them with someone who facilitates academic support, problem-solving strategies, and community services

(National High School Center, 2007). The adult may be one of the student's teachers and has the responsibility of building a relationship with the student by checking in with them on a daily basis. If the disengaging behavior manifests in absences, the teacher calls home to check on the student and encourages his or her return. If disengagement is exhibited through discipline problems and/or academic failure, the student may be required to get a daily or weekly checklist completed by each of his or her teachers which would act as a source of discussion between the assigned adult and the at-risk student (Balfanz, et al., 2007). "Teachers who sought to understand students' behavior, believed in students' ability to succeed, and accepted them 'as is' were especially able to help at-risk students stay in school" (Knesting, 2008, p. 5).

The closeness and quality of relationships between staff delivering the intervention model Check and Connect and students receiving this intervention were examined in a study by Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, and Lehr (2004) to see if student engagement in school improved. The literature related to fostering resilience in children consistently emphasizes that improved results for students are associated with positive and supportive relationships with adults, but these relationships are often overlooked as a process for intervention within schools (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, & Lehr, 2004). Results of this study indicated that perceptions of closeness and relationship quality from both monitor and students helped to improve engagement in school as related to school attendance. Additionally, the monitor's perception of the relationship was a significant predictor of academic engagement rated by teachers.



*What can Governors do?*

Established in 1908, the National Governor's Association is a forum by which the nation's governors influence policies and procedures that apply to state concerns (Curran & Reyna, 2009). According to Princiotta and Reyna (2009) Governors must address several challenges to the dropout problem: (a) Dropping out is too easy; (b) Schools lack the capacity for dropout prevention; (c) States do not effectively reengage those who have dropped out; and (d) The high school credential lacks rigor and relevance. To address these challenges, Governors can promote policies that expect more of students and help schools to reach at-risk students. Increasing the compulsory attendance age would make it more difficult for students to drop out and weighting graduation rates more heavily in school accountability formulas would emphasize the importance of doing everything to keep and recapture students. States should take responsibility for dropout prevention and recovery processes and fund the development and implementation of early warning systems that track interventions and strategies that support at-risk students. For those students who have dropped out, states should provide incentives to districts that implement recovery strategies to recapture students and assist in obtaining a high school credential. Governors can help modernize the high school experience by creating rigorous and relevant pathways to postsecondary and career opportunities that award course credit on performance instead of seat time (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009).

**Early Detection-Data Collection**

For dropout prevention to be effective, schools must develop a comprehensive system of data collection and analysis. Data should be collected and analyzed on the effectiveness of policies, procedures, initiatives, and interventions that are implemented

and are meant to help students be successful in school. Four sources of data should be considered: (a) perception data; (b) demographic data; (c) student assessment data; and (d) data on school processes (Edwards & Edwards, 2007, p. 17).

When asked, the majority of educators said that their school was above average in identifying students at risk of dropping out but offered little evidence in whether or not this identification lead to prevention. Seventy percent of the teachers and 71% of the principals interviewed stated that an effective early warning system was critical in reducing the dropout rate. Teachers must have accurate information in order to know how well their schools are doing in helping students persist to graduation and where to target their efforts for those who are not (Bridgeland et al., 2009).

In developing effective data systems, school districts must take the following concerns into consideration:

1. Have the capital and software resources to create a data system that meets its needs.
2. Have *Good Enough* data provided to educators. The data should be (a) accurate; (b) targeted to students' needs; (c) easily accessible; (d) timely; (e) secure; (f) easily understood; and (g) affordable.
3. Help educators develop the skills to interpret and use data daily for school-wide and classroom-based decisions and to guide instruction.
4. Continuously monitor the suitability of data that points to the need for interventions. (Baker Evaluation, Research, and Consulting, Inc., p. 12)

Bridgeland et al. (2006) discovered that success in school was possible for most of the students who had dropped out. Early identification of the predictors of high school

failure can lead to developing effective strategies for intervention that influence the decisions of at-risk students (Suh, et al., 2007).

The National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research has created an Early Warning System (EWS) tool and guide to support district and school efforts in systematically identifying students who are at risk of dropping out of high school. A district or school may develop its own early warning system tool or use the free EWS Tool v2.0, developed in Microsoft Excel, which can be downloaded from the National High School Center's website. An effective EWS uses readily available school level student data and research-based indicators that are known to identify students at risk of dropping out, such as student attendance, course failures, grade point average (GPA), and credits earned. Once accurately identified through an EWS, interventions can be provided to students to help them get back on track and persist towards graduation and monitored throughout the year. The implementation process has seven steps: (1) Establish roles and responsibilities; (2) Use the EWS Tool v.2.0; (3) Analyze the EWS data; (4) Review the EWS data; (5) Assign and provide interventions; (6) Monitor students and interventions; and (7) Evaluate and refine the EWS process (Therriault, et al., 2010, p. 1).

According to Therriault, et al. (2010), EWS teams should meet at the beginning of the school year, after the first 20 or 30 days of school, and regularly at the end of each grading period. For each student meeting thresholds of an at-risk indicator, team members should consider interventions and continue to use the EWS data to closely monitor student's progress. The EWS team members should consist of personnel who know the students well and have the authority to make decisions about staffing. Team

members might include the principal or designee, a feeder school representative, guidance counselors, content area teachers, special education teachers, and English language learner teachers, and a district office representative (Therriault, et al., 2010).

Early warning system data can be used to determine gaps in school-wide or district-wide programs. For example, students who are off track their first semester of high school may trigger district and school officials to examine trends to see if middle school feeder schools are preparing students adequately for the transition into high school. More complex problems regarding student disengagement may warrant a decision about the effective use of resources or the allocation of additional resources (Therriault, et al., 2010).

At least once per year the EWS team should assess the degree in which indicators are accurately predicting students who are at risk of dropping out of high school. Ideally a high proportion of students graduating would not be flagged with at-risk indicators, and those who dropped out would have been flagged (Therriault, et al., 2010). The real effectiveness of early-warning indicators lies in the strategic focus and capacity of school leaders to turn data on student disengagement into improved student outcomes (Pinkus, 2008).

### Changes to Accountability

On September 23, 2011, President Obama announced his plan to give states the flexibility in meeting high standards of accountability. “We’re going to let states, schools and teachers come up with innovative ways to give our children the skills they need to compete for the jobs of the future” (Obama, 2011, para. 17). In doing so, state leaders have the option of applying for a waiver process, announced by White House Secretary

of Education Arne Duncan, where states agree to create their own accountability systems that address the high standards formerly set out by No Child Left Behind and include the current administration's accountability goals (Dillon, 2011). The intent is to give states the option to bypass meeting the specific requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) in exchange for taking specific responsibility in doing what works for their student in meeting "rigorous and comprehensive State-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction" (U.S. Department of Education, ESEA Flexibility Overview, 2011).

The *ESEA Flexibility* document, found on the U.S. Department of Education's website, outlines 10 key provisions of the law that may be waived for states that qualify for the waiver process. Among the 10 provisions, the 2014 proficiency deadline, redesigning low-performing schools, student waivers to attend higher performing school, and implementing more rigorous teacher and principal evaluation systems are among those included. In order to receive flexibility through the waiver process, State Education Agencies (SEA) must submit plans that meet four principles: college and career readiness expectations for all students, state-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support, effective instruction and leadership support, and reduction of duplication and unnecessary burden (U.S. Department of Education, ESEA Flexibility, 2011). To meet the second principle regarding recognition, accountability, and support, SEAs must create "incentives and include differentiated interventions and support to improve student achievement and graduation rates and to close achievement gaps for all subgroups, including interventions specifically focused on improving the performance of English

Learners and students with disabilities” (U.S. Department of Education, ESEA Flexibility, p. 4).

As a result of an effort to create a single set of clear academic standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State Officers have worked collaboratively with participating state representatives, various educators, content experts, researchers, national organizations, and community groups to produce K12 Common Core State Standards for mathematics and English Language Arts. These standards are the result of what all stakeholders believe students should know and be able to do in order to be college and career ready upon completing high school. The college-and-career readiness standards are interspersed throughout the Common Core standards (NGA, 2010). The Common Core Standards were published in June of 2010 and have been adopted by thirty-five states and the District of Columbia (Louisiana Department of Education, 2010). Reeves (2011d) suggests that educators can prepare now for the release of the Common Core standards by finding a common ground between current state’s standards and the Common Core, increasing informational writing at each grade level of schooling, collaborating to identify *power standards* that have the greatest impact on student learning, embracing common formative assessments administered at critical points of the school year, and using the standards as a minimum demonstration of what students should know and be able to do.

Louisiana is one of twenty-six states to receive funding from the *Race to the Top Assessment* grant which allows states to join efforts with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) to develop new common assessments.

These new common assessments will be aligned with the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and mathematics (Louisiana Department of Education, 2010).

The PARCC assessment system will provide states a K-12 assessment system that measures students' College and Career Readiness, utilizes technology effectively for assessment results, provides educators with more formative data throughout the school year for instructional adjustments and student interventions, and measures the full extent of the Common Core Standards as a comparison across states (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

### Conclusion

“No educational system in the history of the world has ever accomplished what American educators are now called upon to do. To make their challenge even more formidable, the resources available to support their efforts are being slashed” (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 6). Dufour and Marzano contend that the collaborative effort and shared leadership through the process of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) is the most sustainable way to meet the challenging accountability standards and learning needs of difficult students. Reeves suggests that accountability systems be redefined from an emphasis on test scores to a comprehensive learning system that emphasizes the kind of work that all stakeholders engage in—students, teachers, administrators, board members, parents, and communities (2011a). Since principals are key agents in systemic change efforts, Superintendents who want to create engaging schools should develop personal relationships and create capacity with principals. To make disruptive innovations sustainable, school and district leaders should build the following capacities with stakeholders: a) the capacity to maintain a future orientated focus; b) the capacity to

develop a clear sense of direction; and c) the capacity to strategically use existing resources to create the future focus (Schlechty, 2011).

Dropout prevention planning using data-driven early identification and interventions is still in its infancy stages. Developing trust and continuous dialogue around students at risk of dropping out requires data to be transparent with students, families, and the greater community. “Many children who are at-risk of dropping out rely on the structure, predictability, and consistency of school to temper the chaos in their life outside of school” (Edwards & Edwards, 2007, p. 37). The predictive power of early-warning data will lead to strategies that help students re-engage in learning. Over forty years of efficacy research illustrates the powerful influence that educators’ beliefs have on student performance (Reeves, 2011c). After a thorough review of the literature, strengthening teacher efficacy is the one link missing in the literature tying collaborative efforts that build teacher competence, early identification of at-risk students, creating engaging schools, and helping students persist towards graduation.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This study examined the impact of teacher-efficacy beliefs on teacher perceptions of effectiveness in helping students at-risk of graduating on time. Chapter III illustrates the design and analyses that were used for this study. It describes who the participants were in the study, how they were selected, the various instruments that were used to collect data from the participants, and the statistical tests that were used to analyze the data. The variables studied were the subscales of teacher efficacy (Engagement, Instruction, and Management) of math and English Language Arts teachers at the fourth, seventh, and ninth grade levels and teacher perceptions of their efforts to re-engage students to persist towards graduation. A correlation design methodology was used to investigate the relationship between teacher efficacy subscales and teacher perceived effectiveness in helping students re-engage in schooling. Specific research questions to be answered were:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant difference in subscales of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage (*Behaviorally and Academically*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their

effectiveness in assisting students re-engage behaviorally by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ4: Is there a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students to re-engage academically by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

### Research Design

This study employed a non-experimental descriptive research design using correlation methodology. Descriptive research design allows the researcher to observe and describe the subject's behavior using a scientific method and without influencing their behavior. Descriptive research design often serves as a foundation to additional quantitative studies providing important information on variables worthy of further quantitative testing (Shuttleworth, 2008).

Questionnaires allowed the researcher to gather information directly from teachers in order to analyze data to answer the research questions. Subscales of teacher efficacy and subscales of teacher perceived effectiveness in helping re-engage students were the dependent variables. The independent variables were the grade level and subject areas taught by teachers involved in the study—specifically, fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and English Language Arts. Status variables included gender, highest degree of schooling completed, teacher experience, teacher experience at current school, teaching assignment, and whether the teacher taught regular education students, gifted education students, or special education students. Low cost, ease of accessibility, and the ability to generalize findings to larger populations are the main

benefits of correlation research. Correlation research does have its weaknesses—it is a superficial approach to social life, the design limits exploration of specifics, there is a lack of understanding of the social context of the respondent's answers, and it does not lend itself to a cause and effect determination (Deflem, 1998).

### Participants

The population of interest for this study were certified fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and English Language Arts teachers from one large school system in south Louisiana. The population of teachers selected for this study was based on prior research which determined that these grades levels and subject areas are highly predictive of identifying students who may become at risk of dropping out. The participating school system has 54 schools with a variety of configurations serving communities of various demographics. Services from this school system are provided to more than 37,221 students in grades K-12.

Not all lower school classifications had the same grade configurations. The classifications of the schools were as follows: 25 schools with Elementary classification, 21 schools with a Middle or Junior High classification, and 8 schools with a High School classification. Of the 54 schools from this district, 39 schools were invited to participate, which comprised a variety of configurations including the following: (a) kindergarten through fifth grade; (b) kindergarten through sixth grade; (c) kindergarten through eighth grade; (d) first through fifth grade; (e) fourth through sixth grade; (f) sixth through eighth grade; (g) seventh through eighth grade; and h) ninth through twelfth grade. The sample size of teachers surveyed was estimated to be 165 teachers.

## Instrumentation

According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), “a valid measure of teacher efficacy must encompass both an assessment of personal competence and an analysis of the task in terms of resources and constraints that exist in particular teaching contexts” (p. 240). Bandura (1997) noted that measuring teacher efficacy should investigate the teacher’s judgment of his or her competence within a broad range of tasks required to perform. Respondents should indicate the strength of their efficacy beliefs by choosing from a range of levels within the context of teaching tasks involving difficult conditions.

When conducting correlation research, it usually involves a representative sample of respondents completing a questionnaire in order to derive conclusions about the population from which the sample was chosen (Deflem, 1998). This study consisted of three survey instruments for participants to complete: a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A), the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) short Form developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) (see Appendix B), and a questionnaire created by this researcher designed to measure teacher perceived effectiveness in helping re-engage students so that they persist and graduate on time (see Appendix C).

### *Demographic Instrument*

The first instrument, designed by this researcher, gathered demographic information from the teacher participants. This instrument collected descriptive data that was used in analysis. Specifically, respondents were asked to provide information on their gender (male/female), highest degree level obtained (bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctorate degree), total teaching experience (0 – 3 years, 4 – 10 years, 11 – 20 years, 21 – 30 years, or more than 30 years), total teaching experience at the school

currently teaching (0 – 3 years, 4 – 10 years, 11 – 20 years, 21 – 30 years, or more than 30 years), their current teaching assignment (Fourth grade math, Fourth grade ELA, Fourth grade math and ELA, Seventh grade math, Seventh grade ELA, Seventh grade math and ELA, Ninth grade math, Ninth grade ELA, or Ninth grade math and ELA), and whether he or she was considered a regular education teacher, a gifted education teacher, or a special education teacher. The information provided will remain anonymous. Nothing on this instrument has led to the identification of participants.

#### *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale*

The second instrument used in this study was the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* (TSES), short form, developed at the Ohio State University. The developers of the TSES are Megan Tschannen-Moran, from the College of William and Mary and Anita Woolfolk Hoy, from the Ohio State University. Dr. Anita Woolfolk Hoy has posted a letter granting permission (see Appendix D) to use this instrument for any researcher who so chooses.

The instrument has twelve (12) questions on it and has been found to consistently moderate three correlated factors: *Efficacy in Student Engagement*, *Efficacy in Instructional Strategies*, and *Efficacy in Classroom Management*. Factor I, *Efficacy in Student Engagement*, has four questions (Items 2, 3, 4, 11) which pertain to the teacher's judgment of his or her capability to get students to value and want to do the school work expected of them. In addition, question 11 addresses the teacher's perceived capability to involve the family in helping their child reengage and be successful in school (i.e. "How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?"). Factor II, *Efficacy in Instructional Strategies*, has four questions (Items 5, 9, 10, 12) which pertain

to the teacher's judgment of his or her capability to implement instructional and assessment strategies that help students learn what is expected of them. Factor III, Efficacy in Classroom Management, has four questions (Items 1, 6, 7, 8) which pertain to the teacher's judgment of his or her capability to implement classroom management strategies that minimize classroom disruptions and help students participate in an appropriate manner so that learning can occur. The 12 questions use a Likert-type response scale to measure the teacher's beliefs about how much he or she can do to address the kinds of circumstances that create challenges in the classroom. The responses range from 1 to 9 using the following categories: 1-Nothing, 3-Very Little, 5-Some Influence, 7-Quite a Bit, and 9-A Great Deal, with numbered ranges in between.

The authors provided reliability information for the overall instrument and for the three subscales mentioned above. In addition to this information, reliabilities were calculated using responses from pilot study participants, as well as, responses from those who participated in the actual study. Each of the Cronbach's alphas is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Reliability Statistics for Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Short Form and Subscales*

Subscale	Author Provided	Pilot Study	Actual Study
Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale	.81		
Efficacy in Student Engagement	.81	.89	.81
Efficacy in Instructional Strategies	.86	.80	.78
Efficacy in Classroom Management	.86	.82	.83

*Teachers' Sense of Effectiveness for Re-engaging Students*

The third instrument has been developed by this researcher. A review of relevant literature led to devising a questionnaire designed to measure teacher perceived effectiveness related to helping students re-engage in learning and persist in graduating on time. The researcher-generated questionnaire contains two student vignettes and nine (9) questions that follow each vignette, for a total of eighteen (18) questions. The instrument was designed to measure the teacher's perceived effectiveness in re-engaging a student in the learning process using two different subscales – one for behavior and one for academics. Vignette 1 describes a student disengaged from the learning process as evidenced by his pattern of excessive behavior infractions. Vignette 2 describes a student disengaged from the learning process as evidenced by his pattern of excessive academic failure. Both vignettes include a male student for the purpose of consistency. After each vignette, teachers answered a set of nine questions to determine their perceptions of their effectiveness in helping each student re-engage in the learning process in order to remain on track and graduate on time. The 18 questions (same nine questions for both vignettes) use a Likert-type response scale to measure the teachers' beliefs about how effective they judge themselves to be in helping re-engage students academically and behaviorally. The Likert-type responses range from 1 to 7 using the following categories: 1-extremely ineffective, 4-moderately effective, and 7-extremely effective, with numbered ranges between the ones described above.

A panel of experts was formed of teachers considered specialists in their curriculum area and grade level. This panel of experts first examined the two student vignettes used in this instrument to ensure the practicality of the behavior and academic

circumstances involving the students. Second, the panel examined the nine questions that followed each vignette to ensure that each question was a reasonable expectation of what teachers would do in an attempt to re-engage student(s) in learning. This group of teachers met the same qualifications required to be a teacher in the district, have created content to be taught by teachers currently teaching in the district, have provided professional development for teachers for various academic and behavioral interventions, and are employed as and are considered Curriculum Specialists for the district under study. Minor corrections were made based upon the panel of expert's feedback.

A sample of schools, one with grade 4, one with grade 7, and one with grade 9 was randomly selected to participate in a pilot study of this instrument. A simple random sampling was employed, using the lottery method, to pick a sample of schools meeting each of the above mentioned categories. All schools in the district have a state number, for example 52, which uniquely identifies them. Three separate drawings occurred using the state numbers assigned to each school, one for schools with a grade 4 configuration, one for schools with a grade 7 configuration, and one for schools with a grade 9 configuration. Beginning with schools that had a grade 4 configuration, the number assigned to each school was written on a piece of paper and placed in a bowl. A Curriculum Specialist randomly selected one school that had a fourth grade configuration to participate in the pilot study. This process was repeated using schools with a grade 7 configuration, and then all schools with a grade 9 configuration. Some schools had both a fourth grade and a seventh grade configuration; when repeating this process, school numbers of schools that included both configurations were replaced. Teachers from these randomly selected schools, which met the grade level and academic specifications



described earlier, were asked to respond to this questionnaire to check for clarity of instructions, length of instrument, appropriateness of questions, and any other suggestions thought to improve the instrument and did not participate in the formal study. The reliability of the instrument was determined using teacher responses from those schools participating in the pilot study. In addition, Cronbach's alphas were calculated using the responses from those who participated in the actual study. Reliability statistics from both groups are listed below in Table 2 for each subscale of this instrument.

Table 2

*Reliability Statistics for Teachers' Sense of Effectiveness for Re-engaging Students*

Subscale	Pilot Study	Actual Study
Behavior	.67	.92
Academics	.90	.94

### Procedures

Prior to beginning the study, all ethics requirements of The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB) were met and IRB approval was granted (see Appendix E). The Superintendent of the participating district was sent a written letter seeking permission to conduct this study with the grade levels and subject specific teachers targeted for this study and his approval was granted (see Appendix F). The letter explained the purpose of the study and requested permission to contact principals regarding participation in the study. The letter requested permission to provide

principals with a packet of questionnaires to give to their teachers who are eligible to participate in the study.

Each participating school was sent a questionnaire packet which consisted of teacher survey instruments, principal and teacher informed consent letters, and white envelopes for teachers to place their instruments inside once completed. An informed consent form was provided to principals (see Appendix G) of participating schools and teachers (see Appendix H) participating in the study. The informed consent forms were placed in the questionnaire packets sent to the principals. The informed consent forms also provided teacher participants with a written notification of the purpose of the study, estimated time for completing questionnaires, the assessment of risk and benefits to participants, the researcher's contact information for questions regarding participants' rights or any other questions about the research itself. Teachers were instructed to review and sign an informed consent form if they agreed to participate in the study.

#### *Administration of the Questionnaires*

With permission from the superintendent granted, a questionnaire packet was delivered to each school principal via the school system's internal mail service. The informed consent letter to the principal served as a cover letter to the principal requesting his or her consent, describing the purpose of the study, providing instructions for proper dissemination and retrieval of questionnaires, as well as, directions for returning the packet of information to the researcher. After delivery, an email went out to each participating school's principal describing the purpose of the study and the other information as set out above.

In order to keep track of the participating schools' return rate, each manila envelope had a label with the name of the school and principal's name on it. An additional label was also placed on the envelope which included the researcher's name and location for return. This label also included two line items, one indicating the number of questionnaires sent to the school and one indicating the number of questionnaires returned to the researcher. This was done as a self-checking process that hopefully encouraged a higher rate of returns from the participating schools. It was expected that two weeks would be sufficient time for principals to receive the envelopes, disseminate the questionnaires, and for teachers to complete the questionnaires and return the documentation to the researcher. After this allotted time, follow up emails were sent and phone calls were made to participating school principals of non-responding schools.

#### Data Analysis

The first research question asked if there was a difference between the subscale scores of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) for various grade level content area teachers. For example, it sought to investigate if there was a difference in the teacher efficacy score for the subscale engagement for fourth grade math teachers, seventh grade math teachers, and ninth grade math teachers. If so, were these differences significant? This analysis continued for each of the subscales of teacher efficacy and the different grade level and content area teachers.

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

The second research question asked if there was a difference between the subscale scores of teacher effectiveness in re-engaging students in learning (*Behavior and Academics*) for various grade level content area teachers. For example, it sought to investigate if there was a difference in the scores for teacher effectiveness for re-engaging students behaviorally for fourth grade math teachers, seventh grade math teachers, and ninth grade math teachers. If so, were these differences significant? This analysis continued for the subscale of teacher effectiveness for re-engaging students academically for the different grade level content area teachers.

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant difference in subscales of teacher perception of effectiveness in assisting students re-engage (*Behaviorally and Academically*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

Both research questions one and two examined differences in two or more groups where there were two or more dependent variables. Using SPSS a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tested to see if changes in the independent variable(s) had a significant effect on the dependent variable(s). In both research questions, the independent variable was the grade level content area of the teachers. The dependent variables for research question one were the subscale scores of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*). The dependent variables for research question two were the subscale scores of teacher effectiveness in assisting students to re-engage (*Behaviorally and Academically*) in learning.

The third research question asked if there was a relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy and teacher perception of effectiveness in assisting students re-engage

behaviorally by grade level. For example, it sought to investigate if there was a correlation between fourth grade teachers' subscale scores on teacher efficacy (i.e. engagement) and fourth grade teachers' subscale scores on teacher effectiveness in re-engaging students behaviorally. This analysis continued for each grade level of teacher and for each subscale score of teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness for re-engaging students behaviorally.

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and teacher perception of effectiveness in assisting students re-engage behaviorally by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

The fourth research question asked if there was a relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy and teacher perception of effectiveness in assisting students re-engage academically by grade level. For example, it sought to investigate if there was a correlation between fourth grade teachers' subscale scores on teacher efficacy (i.e. engagement) and fourth grade teachers' subscale scores on teacher effectiveness in re-engaging students academically. This analysis continued for each grade level of teacher and for each subscale score of teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness for re-engaging students academically.

RQ4: Is there a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and teacher perception of effectiveness in assisting students re-engage academically by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

Both research question three and research question four examined the relationship of dependence between two variables, in this case, the subscale scores of teacher efficacy and the subscale scores of teacher effectiveness in re-engaging students. Using SPSS, the statistical procedure used to answer these questions was a Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Correlation is useful in that it informs the researcher about whether two variables have a positive or negative relationship, as well as the relationship's strength (Choudhury, 2009a). The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation is one measure of correlation which quantifies the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. Teacher Efficacy and Teacher Perceived Effectiveness are both variables that were measured using an interval scale of measurement and were suspected to have a linear relationship with each other, thereby fulfilling both conditions that satisfy using this coefficient (Choudhury, 2009b).

### Summary

Chapter III provides an overview of the design and analyses that were used for this study. It describes the participants and explains the research methodology that was used to answer the research questions. A descriptive research design using a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and a correlation methodology were employed.

The sample of teachers was those from one Louisiana school district who teach English or math to fourth grade, seventh grade, or ninth grade students. The data collection procedures and the instruments used were thoroughly described. Ethical procedures to ensure participant consent, confidentiality, reliability and validity, and appropriate approval from the institutional review board were also described.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Chapter III provided direction for the statistical methods for this study. Chapter IV will discuss the data that were collected and the results from the quantitative analyses that were conducted. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of teacher efficacy beliefs on teacher perceptions of effectiveness in helping students at-risk of graduating on time. The population consisted of certified fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and English Language Arts teachers from one large school system in south Louisiana. The participating school system has 54 schools with a variety of configurations serving communities of various demographics.

Of the 54 schools from this district, three schools (one from each grade level configuration) participated in the pilot study of the instruments and 36 schools were invited to participate in the actual study. Two hundred and eighty-six questionnaires were sent to the 36 schools that met the grade level and academic specifications. Thirty-one of the 36 schools returned questionnaires. Of the 286 questionnaires sent, 145 were returned with one questionnaire incomplete. For the incomplete questionnaire, only the demographic page was completed and the other two parts of the questionnaire were left unanswered. The data analyses are based on the 144 questionnaires that were returned completed. This produced a response rate of 50.3%.

Chapter IV is divided into five sections. The first section describes demographic information regarding the teacher participants who were involved in the study. The second section describes the descriptive statistics from the responses to the questionnaires. The third section follows with results of the statistical tests that were

used to answer each research question. The fourth section describes ancillary findings of this research. The last section summarizes the findings from the data analyses.

### Demographic Data

Responses to the first instrument generated demographic information from teacher participants. Specifically, respondents were asked to provide information on their gender, highest degree level obtained, total teaching experience, total teaching experience at the school currently teaching, teaching classification, grade level of students teaching, and current teaching assignment. Frequency data for the 144 teacher participants can be found in Tables 3 and 4.

Nearly all (92%) of the teachers participating in this study were female. Over 40% of the participants had an advanced degree above the bachelor's degree. Of the 144 teacher participants in this study, 61% had eleven or more years of teaching experience. Nearly a third (29.9%) of the participants have been teaching at their school for three years or less. See Table 3 for additional information.

As noted in Table 4, most of the respondents (80.6%) are classified as regular education teachers and over half (54.2%) were teachers at the elementary school level. Of the 78 elementary teachers who responded, 75.6% teach in a self-contained environment as opposed to a departmentalized environment. Teachers teaching in a self-contained environment teach all four core subject areas to the same group of students, in particular for this study, both English Language Arts and mathematics. Less than 1% of the 35 participants from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade configuration responded that they teach both ELA and mathematics. No one from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade classification responded that he or she taught students both mathematics and English Language Arts content.



Table 3

*Frequencies for Teacher Characteristics of Teachers Participating in the Study*

Variable	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	11	7.6
	Female	133	92.4
Highest Degree Obtained	Bachelors	86	59.7
	Masters	57	39.6
	Doctorate	1	0.7
Years of Teaching Experience	0-3	12	8.3
	4-10	44	30.6
	11-20	57	39.6
	21-30	24	16.7
	More than 30	7	4.9
Years Teaching at Current School	0-3	43	29.9
	4-10	63	43.8
	11-20	24	16.7
	21-30	12	8.3
	More than 30	2	1.4

Of the 144 teachers who participated in this study, 27.1% responded that they are assigned to teach mathematics, 30.1% responded that they are assigned to teach English

Language Arts, and 42.4% responded that they are assigned to teach both mathematics and English Language Arts to students. See Table 4 for additional information.

Table 4

*Frequencies for Classroom Setting*

Variable	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Classification	Regular	116	80.6
	Gifted	13	9.0
	Special Education	15	10.4
Grade Level	4 <sup>th</sup>	78	54.2
	7 <sup>th</sup>	35	24.3
	9 <sup>th</sup>	31	21.5
Teaching Assignment	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	11	7.6
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade ELA	8	5.6
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math and ELA	59	41.0
	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	13	9.0
	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade ELA	20	13.9
	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math and ELA	2	1.4
	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	15	10.4
	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade ELA	16	11.1

## Descriptive Statistics

The second instrument used in this study was the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* (TSES). The short form of this instrument has twelve (12) questions on it and has been found to consistently moderate three correlated factors: *Efficacy in Student Engagement*, *Efficacy in Instructional Strategies*, and *Efficacy in Classroom Management*. The 12 questions use a Likert-type response scale to measure the teacher's beliefs about how much he or she can do to address the kinds of circumstances that create challenges in his or her own classroom. The Likert-type scale was a 9-point scale using the following categories: 1-Nothing, 3-Very Little, 5-Some Influence, 7-Quite a Bit, and 9-A Great Deal, with numbered ranges in between the ones described above.

Factor I, Efficacy in Student Engagement, has four questions (Items 2, 3, 4, 11) which pertain to the teacher's judgment of his or her capability to get students to value and want to do the school work expected of them that leads to learning. In addition, question 11 addresses the teacher's perceived capability to involve the family in helping their child re-engage and be successful in school (i.e. "How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?"). As evident in Table 5, teacher respondents scored the lowest average with the largest standard deviation on this subscale. Teachers, on average, saw themselves between somewhat *influential* to *quite a bit* capable of meeting the expectation of engaging students in learning.

Factor II, Efficacy in Instructional Strategies, has four questions (Items 5, 9, 10, 12) which pertain to the teacher's judgment of his or her capability to implement instructional and assessment strategies that help students learn what is expected of them. These four questions address the teacher's role in implementing alternative classroom

strategies, developing good questions, using varied assessment strategies, and providing alternative explanations and examples. As evident in Table 5, responses for these four questions indicate that teachers believe themselves to be most capable on this subscale. This subscale had the highest average minimum, the highest mean, with the lowest standard deviation. Teachers judged themselves to be between *quite a bit* to *a great deal* capable of meeting instructional expectations that are expected of them.

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Short Form Subscales (N=144)*

Subscale	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Student Engagement (Items 2, 3, 4, 11)	3.25	9.00	6.85	1.19
Instructional Strategies (Items 5, 9, 10, 12)	5.00	9.00	7.76	.84
Classroom Management (Items 1, 6, 7, 8)	3.00	9.00	7.57	1.02

Factor III, Efficacy in Classroom Management, has four questions (Items 1, 6, 7, 8) which pertain to the teacher's judgment of his or her capability to implement classroom management strategies that minimize classroom disruptions and help students participate in an appropriate manner so that learning can occur. These four questions address the teacher's role in establishing a classroom management system, controlling disruptive behavior, having students follow classroom rules, and calming disruptive

students. Closely behind instructional strategies, teachers judged themselves to be *quite a bit* capable to handle the teacher expectations related to classroom management. See Table 5 for additional information. Overall, teachers in this study responded to the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Short Form* in a highly efficacious manner on the subscales: Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management.

The third instrument, *Teachers' Sense of Effectiveness for Re-engaging Students*, was designed to measure teacher perceived effectiveness related to helping students re-engage in learning and persist in graduating on time. The questionnaire contained two student vignettes and nine (9) questions that followed each vignette, for a total of eighteen (18) questions. The instrument was designed to measure the teacher's perceived effectiveness in re-engaging a student in the learning process using two different subscales—one for behavior and one for academics.

The 18 questions (same nine questions for both vignettes) used a Likert-type response scale to measure the teachers' beliefs about how effective they judge themselves to be in helping re-engage students academically and behaviorally. The Likert-type scale was a 7-point scale using the following categories: 1-extremely ineffective, 4-moderately effective, and 7-extremely effective, with numbered ranges between the ones described above.

Vignette 1 described a student disengaged from the learning process as evidenced by his pattern of excessive behavior infractions. Vignette 2 described a student disengaged from the learning process as evidenced by his pattern of excessive academic failure. The questions that followed addressed the teacher's judgment of himself or herself in meeting teaching expectations that included: designing learning experiences

that are engaging and matched individual interests and abilities, helping the student maintain good attendance to school and improve academic achievement, providing the student with intensive academic and behavioral interventions, involving the family in decisions, persuading the student that he or she can be successful, as well as, believing that the teacher’s efforts lead to the student graduating on time. Overall, teacher responses to both subscales, behavior and academics, indicate that teachers believe themselves to be slightly more than “moderately effective” in being capable of re-engaging each student described in the vignettes. See Table 6 for additional information.

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for Re-engaging Students Subscales (N=144)*

Subscale	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Behavior	2.00	6.78	4.87	.90
Academic	1.89	6.78	4.95	.93

## Statistical Tests

The variables studied were the subscales of teacher efficacy (Engagement, Instruction, and Management) of math and English Language Arts teachers at the fourth, seventh, and ninth grade levels and teacher perceptions of their efforts to re-engage students to persist towards graduation. A correlation design methodology was used to investigate the relationship between teacher efficacy subscales and teacher perceived effectiveness in helping students re-engage in schooling. The data were analyzed in order to respond to the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant difference in subscales of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage (*Behaviorally and Academically*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage behaviorally by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ4: Is there a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students to re-engage academically by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

Beginning with a thorough discussion of the descriptive statistics for each variable, data analyses follow along with findings that address each research question.

A One-way ANOVA was used to address the first research question as to whether or not there is a statistically significant difference in subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers. This tested for a significant difference between subscale scores for each teaching assignment. The descriptive statistics are listed in Table 7, Table 8, and Table 9. From inspection, it is

noted that the teachers on average responded in a highly efficacious manner on all three subscales of teacher efficacy, with Instructional Strategies having the highest total mean (7.77) and Student Engagement having the lowest total mean (6.86) on a nine point scale. Teachers in the fourth grade self-contained setting had the highest average on the Student Engagement subscale, see Table 7 for additional information.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics for Student Engagement and Teaching Assignment*

Subscale	Assignment	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Student Engagement	4 <sup>th</sup> Math	6.82	1.18	11
	4 <sup>th</sup> ELA	6.66	1.20	8
	4 <sup>th</sup> Math & ELA	7.13	1.21	59
	7 <sup>th</sup> Math	6.77	1.22	13
	7 <sup>th</sup> ELA	6.79	1.27	20
	9 <sup>th</sup> Math	6.53	1.01	15
	9 <sup>th</sup> ELA	6.50	.94	16
	Total	6.86	1.17	142

As indicated in Table 8, teacher responses on Instructional Strategies questions had the lowest overall standard deviation of the three subscales. Ninth grade English Language Arts teachers had the highest average on both Instructional Strategies and Classroom Management subscales. Refer to Table 8 and Table 9.



The results of the One-Way ANOVA indicate that there is not a statistically significant difference in subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) by grade level and subject area,  $F(18, 405) = 1.247, p = .220$ . Therefore teachers in each of the grade level assignments and subject areas did not respond significantly different to either of the teacher efficacy subscales.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics for Instructional Strategies and Teaching Assignment*

Subscale	Assignment	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Instructional Strategies	4 <sup>th</sup> Math	7.61	.73	11
	4 <sup>th</sup> ELA	7.34	.84	8
	4 <sup>th</sup> Math & ELA	7.85	.86	59
	7 <sup>th</sup> Math	7.92	.61	13
	7 <sup>th</sup> ELA	7.78	.76	20
	9 <sup>th</sup> Math	7.35	.95	15
	9 <sup>th</sup> ELA	8.09	.84	16
	Total	7.77	.84	142

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics for Classroom Management and Teaching Assignment*

Subscale	Assignment	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Classroom Management	4 <sup>th</sup> Math	7.39	1.01	11
	4 <sup>th</sup> ELA	7.31	1.04	8
	4 <sup>th</sup> Math & ELA	7.63	.98	59
	7 <sup>th</sup> Math	7.63	.89	13
	7 <sup>th</sup> ELA	7.44	1.33	20
	9 <sup>th</sup> Math	7.58	.94	15
	9 <sup>th</sup> ELA	7.67	.98	16
	Total	7.57	1.01	142

A One-way ANOVA was used to address the second research question as to whether or not there is a statistically significant difference in subscales of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage (*Behaviorally and Academically*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers. This tested for a significant difference between subscale scores for each teaching assignment and the descriptive statistics are listed in Table 10. From inspection, it is noted that teachers in the fourth grade self-contained setting had the highest average on both the behavior and academic subscales.

Table 10

*Descriptive Statistics for Re-engaging Students and Teaching Assignment*

Subscale	Assignment	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Behavior	4 <sup>th</sup> Math	5.00	.47	11
	4 <sup>th</sup> ELA	5.00	.61	8
	4 <sup>th</sup> Math & ELA	5.16	.84	59
	7 <sup>th</sup> Math	4.60	1.13	13
	7 <sup>th</sup> ELA	4.36	1.00	20
	9 <sup>th</sup> Math	4.57	.90	15
	9 <sup>th</sup> ELA	4.69	.87	16
	Total	4.86	.91	142
Academics	4 <sup>th</sup> Math	5.14	.84	11
	4 <sup>th</sup> ELA	4.81	1.01	8
	4 <sup>th</sup> Math & ELA	5.17	.93	59
	7 <sup>th</sup> Math	4.71	.91	13
	7 <sup>th</sup> ELA	4.43	.97	20
	9 <sup>th</sup> Math	4.81	.87	15
	9 <sup>th</sup> ELA	5.05	.78	16
	Total	4.95	.93	142

The results of the One-Way ANOVA indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in subscales of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in

assisting students re-engage behaviorally by grade level and subject area,  $F(6, 135) = 2.918, p = .010$ , but not statistically significant for academics,  $F(6, 135) = 2.010, p = .067$ . Closer examination of the pairwise comparisons of the variable behavior with each of the teaching assignments indicates that the significant difference occurs with the teachers in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade self-contained setting who teach both math and English Language Arts. Teachers in this grouping on average rated themselves higher in being capable of meeting the teaching expectations described earlier that would help the student who demonstrated chronic behavioral problems in Vignette 1.

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to address research question three to determine if there existed a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage behaviorally by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers. This tested for a significant relationship of dependence between the subscale scores of teacher efficacy and the subscale scores of teacher effectiveness in re-engaging students. The correlation statistics are listed in Table 11.

There was a positive significant correlation between scores on all three subscales of teacher efficacy and scores on the subscale of behavior for grade 4 math and ELA teachers, as well as, grade 7 math teachers. Additionally, there was a positive significant correlation between scores on the Student Engagement subscale of teacher efficacy and scores on the subscale of behavior for grade 9 math teachers and grade 9 English Language Arts teachers.

Table 11

*Correlations Statistics of Subscales of Teacher Efficacy and Re-engaging Behavior by Teaching Assignment*

		Teaching Assignment						
Subscale	Statistics	4 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
		Math	ELA	Math/ ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA
Student	Pearson	.297	.545	.472**	.663*	.279	.793**	.665**
Engagement	Correlation							
	Sig.	.375	.162	.000	.013	.234	.000	.005
	(2-tailed)							
	N	11	8	59	13	20	15	16
Instructional	Pearson	.393	.365	.277*	.631*	-.007	.224	.311
Strategies	Correlation							
	Sig.	.232	.374	.034	.021	.977	.421	.241
	(2-tailed)							
	N	11	8	59	13	20	15	16
Classroom	Pearson	.035	.497	.411**	.712*	.050	.374	.366
Management	Correlation							
	Sig.	.918	.210	.001	.006	.835	.170	.163
	(2-tailed)							
	N	11	8	59	13	20	15	16

Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to address research question four to determine if there existed a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage academically by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers. This tested for a significant relationship of dependence between the subscale scores of teacher efficacy and the subscale scores of teacher effectiveness in re-engaging students. The correlation statistics are listed in Table 12.

There was a positive significant correlation between scores on the Student Engagement subscale of teacher efficacy and scores on the subscale of academics for grade 4 math and ELA teachers, grade 9 math teachers, as well as, grade 9 English Language Arts teachers. Additionally, there was a positive significant correlation between scores on the Instructional Strategies subscale of teacher efficacy and scores on the subscale of academics for and grade 7 math teachers. There was no significant correlation between scores on the Classroom Management subscale of teacher efficacy and scores on the subscale of academics for either teaching assignment grouping. One note of interest is that, while not significant, there was a negative correlation between scores on all three subscales of teacher efficacy and scores on the subscale of academics but a positive correlation between scores on all three subscales of teacher efficacy and scores on the subscale of behavior for grade 4 math teachers.

Table 12

*Correlations Statistics of Subscales of Teacher Efficacy and Re-engaging Academics by Teaching Assignment*

		Teaching Assignment						
Subscale	Statistics	4 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
		Math	ELA	Math/ ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA
Student	Pearson	-.383	.386	.340**	.501	.300	.621*	.548*
Engagement	Correlation							
	Sig.	.244	.344	.009	.081	.198	.013	.028
	(2-tailed)							
	n	11	8	59	13	20	15	16
Instructional	Pearson	-.359	.450	.250	.777*	.145	.181	.165
Strategies	Correlation							
	Sig.	.278	.263	.056	.002	.541	.517	.542
	(2-tailed)							
	N	11	8	59	13	20	15	16
Classroom	Pearson	-.096	.411	.256	.514	.299	.377	.029
Management	Correlation							
	Sig.	.778	.311	.050	.073	.200	.166	.914
	(2-tailed)							
	N	11	8	59	13	20	15	16

Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Ancillary Findings

Two interesting results that were not part of this original study included teacher feedback regarding their perspective in helping students re-engage in the learning process. The first result was indicated on three questionnaires by different teacher participants. The questionnaires used in this study did not allow for qualitative feedback from teachers. But three teachers wrote in the margins of their questionnaires comments indicating that re-engaging students in learning requires motivation from the student and assistance from the parent(s). Additionally, one of the assistant principals from one high school indicated that her teachers *felt overwhelmed* after completing the questionnaires regarding re-engaging students in the learning process. She indicated that their feelings were mostly indicative of the perceived reality of helping students who are severely off the graduation path.

### Summary

The data analyses presented in this chapter indicate that there is not a statistically significant difference in subscales of teacher efficacy by grade level and subject area but that there is a statistically significant difference in subscales of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage behaviorally, by grade level and subject area. Additionally, positive significant correlations between scores on subscales of teacher efficacy and scores on subscales of behavior, as well as academics, were noted for various grade level assignments. How these results can influence school leadership decisions will be discussed in Chapter V: *Discussion and Implications of the Research*.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of teacher efficacy beliefs on teacher perceptions of effectiveness in helping students at-risk of graduating on time. A thorough review of the literature suggests that teachers are in the perfect position to be an influential source of help to students with life and academic circumstances that inhibit them from staying on the path to graduation but often underestimate their role in helping students develop the resilience to do so. Additional insight from the literature indicates that re-engaging students in the learning process who are severely off the graduation path may threaten the teacher's efficacy and cause him or her to doubt his or her effectiveness. Chapter V will bring this study to a close by discussing the conclusions drawn from this research as related to other research findings, the limitations of this research, and recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

#### Conclusions and Discussion

In an effort to expand the literature regarding teachers' beliefs about helping disengaged students, this study sought to determine if there existed a correlation between a teacher's perceived sense of efficacy and his or her perceived effectiveness to intervene with students who demonstrate academic or behavioral signs of disengagement. This researcher collected data from math and/or English Language Arts (ELA) teachers who teach students at the fourth grade, seventh grade, or ninth grade levels. The variables studied were the subscales of teacher efficacy (Engagement, Instruction, and Management) and teacher perceptions of their efforts to re-engage students who exhibited indicators of academic and behavioral disengagement. A correlation design methodology

was used to investigate the relationship between teacher efficacy subscales and teacher perceived effectiveness in helping students re-engage in schooling. The data were analyzed in order to respond to the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference in subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant difference in subscales of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage (*Behaviorally and Academically*) by grade level and subject area of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage behaviorally by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

RQ4: Is there a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students to re-engage academically by grade level of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers?

The major findings in this study indicate that teacher efficacy did not differ significantly by grade level or subject area. Analyses did indicate though that teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage behaviorally was significant and differed by grade level and subject area but not by academics. Additionally, positive significant correlations between scores on subscales of teacher

efficacy and scores on subscales of behavior, as well as academics, were noted for various grade level assignments.

#### *Subscales of Teacher Efficacy and Teaching Assignment*

As stated in research question one, tests were conducted to determine if a statistically significant difference in subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) for each teaching assignment were evident. According to Bandura, teacher efficacy is a type of self-efficacy in which one judges himself or herself, through a cognitive process, on how well he or she can perform a set of actions required in particular situations (1982). As measured with the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* (TSES), short form, Efficacy in Student Engagement pertained to the teacher's judgment of his or her capability to get students to value learning and want to do the school work expected of them, as well as engage the family in their help. Efficacy in Instructional Strategies pertained to the teacher's judgment of his or her capability to implement instructional and assessment strategies that help students learn what is expected of them. Efficacy in Classroom Management pertained to the teacher's judgment of his or her capability to implement classroom management strategies that minimize classroom disruptions and help students participate in an appropriate manner so that learning can occur. Teachers are more likely to conduct tasks successfully in which they believe themselves to be competent (Bandura, 1997).

Teachers in this study, on average, responded highest to teacher efficacy questions involving Instructional Strategies and lowest to Student Engagement questions. This indicated that teachers believed themselves to be more than *Quite a bit* capable of implementing instructional and assessment strategies that help students learn but less than

*Quite a bit* capable in engaging students in valuing learning and wanting to do the school work expected of them, as well as engaging the family in their help. Teachers in the fourth grade self-contained setting responded on average the highest for believing themselves to be capable of engaging students and the family. Of all three subscales, ninth grade ELA teachers had the highest average on the Instructional Strategies subscale—judging themselves to be *A great deal* capable of implementing instructional and assessment strategies that help students learn. Yilmaz (2011) found in his study of efficacy beliefs of Turkish EFL teachers (English as a Foreign Language) that teachers scored higher on efficacy for instructional strategies than on efficacy for management and engagement. The research findings from this study indicated that teachers responded in a highly efficacious manner on teacher efficacy, but not in a manner that differed significantly to either of the subscales or by grade level teaching assignments.

#### *Teachers' Perceptions in Re-engaging Students*

As stated in research question two, tests were conducted to determine if a statistically significant difference in subscales of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage (*Behaviorally and Academically*) for each teaching assignment were evident. Teachers were given two vignettes designed to measure their perceived effectiveness related to helping students re-engage in learning and persist in graduating on time. Vignette 1 described a student disengaged from the learning process as evidenced by his pattern of excessive behavior infractions. Vignette 2 described a student disengaged from the learning process as evidenced by his pattern of excessive academic failure. The questions that followed addressed the teacher's judgment of himself or herself in meeting teaching expectations that included: designing

learning experiences that are engaging and matched individual interests and abilities, helping the student maintain good attendance to school and improve academic achievement, providing the student with intensive academic and behavioral interventions, involving the family in decisions, persuading the student that he or she can be successful, as well as, believing that the teacher's efforts lead to the student graduating on time. Teachers in the fourth grade self-contained setting had the highest average on both the behavior and academic subscales.

Results indicated a statistically significant difference in teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage behaviorally by teaching assignment but not for academics. Closer examination of the variable *behavior* with each of the teaching assignments indicated that the significant difference occurred with the teachers in the grade 4 self-contained setting. Teachers in this grouping on average rated themselves being slightly higher than *moderately effective* in meeting the teaching expectations that would help the student who demonstrated chronic behavioral problems as described Vignette 1 of the instrument. These results seem to align with the conclusions drawn by Lopes, et al. (2004) in which they determined that as difficult students grow older, teachers' sense of efficacy weakens and teachers believe they are unable to properly teach these students. While wanting to teach students with challenges, most teachers feel inadequate about where and how to teach students with learning and behavioral problems (Lopes, et al., 2004). In addition, teachers' own feelings about themselves and their sense of control and effectiveness interact with their perceptions of students' emotional and behavioral problems and their ratings of these problems (Liljequist & Renk, 2007).

Two conclusions drawn from the results of this research question were surprising to this researcher. First, that significant differences in teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students re-engage behaviorally occurred only with the self-contained teachers of grade 4 students. This researcher thought that the setting for grade 4 teaching assignment would not have mattered for teachers' perspectives in meeting the expectations described above and that a significant difference might have been determined with the other teaching assignments—fourth grade math teachers and fourth grade ELA teachers. Secondly, it was interesting to note that differences were not significant for teachers' perceptions of their perspective in meeting the expectations described above for the student with academic disengagement as illustrated in Vignette 2. This researcher would have thought that perceptions of the teachers in either of the grade 4 teaching assignments would have differed significantly when it came to their perspective of helping the student re-engage academically.

#### *Relationship between Teacher Efficacy and Re-engaging Students Behaviorally*

As stated in research question three, tests were conducted to determine if a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (Engagement, Instruction, and Management) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students to re-engage behaviorally by teaching assignment were evident. Results indicated that teacher perceptions of re-engaging the student behaviorally was significant and positively correlated with scores on all three subscales of teacher efficacy for grade 4 math and ELA teachers, as well as, grade 7 math teachers. What this means is that teachers with these teaching assignments not only rated themselves highly efficacious but also perceived themselves able to help the student who was disengaged

from learning due to chronic behavioral problems and re-engage him in learning in order to get back on the graduation path. Literature suggests that self-perceptions of teaching competence partially influences teacher efficacy. The strength of the teacher's judgment of current abilities and strategies as adequate for the teaching task at hand influences performance in that context. When teachers believe they know how to overcome perceived deficiencies in their capabilities for certain contexts, a resilient sense of teacher efficacy is formed (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998).

Re-engaging the student behaviorally was also positive and significantly correlated with the Student Engagement subscale of teacher efficacy for grade 9 math teachers and grade 9 ELA teachers. It was of interest to note that perceptions to re-engage a student who exhibited behavioral disengagement did not significantly correlate with the subscales of Instructional Strategies or Classroom Management. This seems to align with the findings of Baker (2005) in which he determined that secondary teachers report feeling significantly less able, willing, and ready to manage challenging student behavior than those teachers at the lower grade levels. He noted that when dealing with students who have serious behavior issues, teachers reported low-efficacy in keeping defiant students involved, reaching the most difficult students, and keeping problems from ruining class. Results from his study indicate teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy for managing a classroom environment significantly correlate to their overall readiness for implementing specific behavior intervention strategies (Baker, 2005).

It was unexpected that there existed no correlations for either of the subscales of teacher efficacy and perceptions to re-engage the student behaviorally for grade 4 math teachers, grade 4 ELA teachers or grade 7 ELA teachers. Since teachers in all three of

these teaching assignments rated themselves highest on the subscale of instructional strategies, the researcher presumed that there would be a significant correlation with this subscale and with re-engaging the student behaviorally.

*Relationship between Teacher Efficacy and Re-engaging Students Academically*

As stated in research question four, tests were conducted to determine if a statistically significant relationship between subscales of teacher efficacy (*Engagement, Instruction, and Management*) and of teachers' perception of their effectiveness in assisting students to re-engage academically by teaching assignment were evident. From the previous work of Gibson and Dembo, we know that higher efficacy teachers tend to have higher student engagement than do low-efficacy teachers (1984). Results from this study showed that re-engaging the student academically was significant and positively correlated with the scores on the Student Engagement subscale of teacher efficacy for grade 4 math and ELA teachers, grade 9 math teachers, as well as, grade 9 ELA teachers. Surprising though, re-engaging the student academically was not significant and did not correlate with the Student Engagement subscale for the other teaching assignments—grade 4 math, grade 4 ELA, grade 7 math, and grade 7 ELA. This could be of great concern considering that Bridges et al. (2008) found that students repeatedly emphasized the need for schools to have caring adults who take time to listen and show concern for students prior to implementing solutions to student problems.

In this study, re-engaging the student academically was significant and positively correlated with scores on the Instructional Strategies subscale but only for grade 7 math teachers. This was unexpected by the researcher. Teachers on average responded to teacher efficacy questions involving Instructional Strategies with the highest total mean.



It would seem that the subscale teachers scored themselves most efficacious on would correlate with their perception of re-engaging the student academically. In other words, teachers in this study, in general believe they are highly capable in implementing instructional and assessment strategies that help students learn but do not see themselves highly capable of helping the student in the vignette with the given indicators of academic disengagement. This is important because students reported that teaching approaches that influenced them to stay in school and learn included techniques that made it easy for them to understand and in ways that made the content applicable (Bridges, et al., 2008). Ross and Bruce (2007) found that professional development with explicit consideration to teacher beliefs regarding their capacity to affect student learning is essential for changing the way teachers engage students in learning.

A person's perceptions about the degree to which his or her environment is controllable impacts efficacy beliefs. Bandura (1993) noted that exercising control in one's environment entails two aspects. The first relates to the level and strength of personal efficacy in generating change through perseverance and innovative use of resources. The second relates to the ability one has in altering his or her environment. It would appear that teachers in this study, with the exception of the grade 7 math teachers, do not perceive themselves as having the ability to generate the change necessary to help the student re-engage academically with the use of instructional strategies. The content area knowledge of the teacher and his or her ability to engage students deeply in lessons mattered when helping students persists towards graduation (Silver, et al., 2008).

Teachers' perceptions about re-engaging the student academically were not significant and did not correlate with scores on the Classroom Management subscale of

teacher efficacy for either teaching assignment grouping. Specifically, this indicates that the teacher's beliefs regarding his or her capability to implement strategies that minimize classroom disruptions and help students participate in an appropriate manner did not significantly correlate with their beliefs in their capability to help the student with academic deficiencies. Teachers on average responded to teacher efficacy questions involving Classroom Management *quite a bit* efficaciously. The work of Liljequist and Renk (2007) determined that student externalizing behavioral problems bothered teachers more than internalizing behavioral problems. Personal teaching efficacy was a significant predictor of teacher perceptions of the intensity of internalizing students' behavioral problems. The student in vignette 2 was disengaged academically but did not exhibit *externalizing behavior*. It was expected by this researcher that teachers who judged themselves highly capable in implementing classroom management strategies would have believed these strategies to be beneficial in helping the student with academic disengagement. It may be that teachers in this study, while they perceived themselves highly efficacious in classroom management, do not see their skills in classroom management as benefiting the students academically who demonstrate internalizing behavior.

One note of interest pertains to the correlations found between teacher perceptions to re-engage the student academically and teacher efficacy beliefs for grade 4 math teachers. While not significant, there were negative correlations between scores on all three subscales of teacher efficacy and scores on the subscale of academics for grade 4 math teachers. What this means is that there is an inverse relationship between teachers' perceptions of helping the student re-engage academically and teacher efficacy beliefs for

teachers in this teaching assignment. This may be best explained by Bandura in his work on teacher efficacy. He noted that one may believe that certain actions will create particular outcomes, but if the person is not convinced that he or she can execute those actions, knowledge that it leads to the desired outcome alone does not persuade the person to perform those particular actions (Bandura, 1977).

#### Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Students who drop out have a long history of chronic detachment that begins early on in their school career. Understanding the dropout crisis in terms of academic and/or behavior disengagement is important for teachers of all grade levels. Fortin et al. (2006) concluded that academic failure often results from behavior problems that interfere with learning. Specific recommendations as result of the findings from this study follow that may be used to guide decisions made by practitioners and policy makers.

One important finding from this study was the results that teachers demonstrated in the grade 4 self-contained setting. These teachers responded in a highly efficacious manner and significantly differed in their perceptions of helping the student with behavior disengagement than other teachers teaching either fourth grade math or fourth grade ELA. They also demonstrated a significant relationship in their efficacy beliefs and their perceptions to help the student re-engage in schooling. This was evident for this group when it was not so for the other grade 4 teachers. It is recommended that principals of schools with elementary grade levels use these findings as part of their decision-making process in the event they find themselves considering departmentalizing their core subjects or need justification in returning to a self-contained model at the lower grade levels.

Additional important findings from this study were that perceptions to re-engage a student who exhibited behavioral disengagement did not significantly correlate with the subscales of Instructional Strategies or Classroom Management for grade 7 ELA teachers, grade 9 math teachers, or grade 9 ELA teachers. Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, et al. (2009) indicated that one-third of the students participating in their study experienced disengagement, with behavior being the most cause for concern after age 13.

Another major finding of this study is that teachers responded in a highly efficacious manner to the teacher efficacy questions in general but when given a specific student with specific signs of academic disengagement, responses to teachers' perceived capability slightly decreased. While results showed significant correlations on the Student Engagement subscale for some grade level configurations, only one grade level assignment—grade 7 math teachers—was significant and positively correlated with scores on the Instructional Strategies subscale. This information should prove valuable to education stakeholders because the literature indicates that academic success in courses taken is very predictive of those who actually graduate (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).

#### *What Can State Leaders Do?*

State leaders can ensure that district and school personnel have the capacity to implement dropout prevention strategies using a response to intervention model (RTI). State leaders can fund the development and implementation of early warning systems that track interventions and strategies that help students who demonstrate behavioral and/or academic signs of disengagement, especially for fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade students. Additionally, state leaders can review and revise state policies that are mostly reactive instead of proactive. Policies that are well intentioned but actually

“push” students out the door should be closely examined with all community stakeholders so that best practices help students with behavioral and academic deficits. If educators working with fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade students do not increase their efficacy in helping disengaged students re-engage in the learning, an over emphasis on policies and procedures will continue the cycle of pushing these students out the door.

*What Can District Leaders Do?*

It is recommended that district leaders make the commitment to put into place a district early warning system tool that integrates a response to intervention (RTI) model for all students. The early warning system would use readily available school level student data and research-based indicators that are known to identify students at risk of dropping out, such as student attendance, course failures, grade point average (GPA), and credits earned. District leaders should begin with training of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth personnel in the use of the early warning system, the implementation of the tiered system of academic and behavioral intervention strategies, and processes for progress monitoring of student behavior. The training offered to faculty and staff would ensure opportunities for mastery performances are in place and that follow up and support are provided so that efficacy in grade 4, grade 7 and grade 9 teachers is strengthened. Additionally, district leaders can develop processes that ensure family members of students at these grade levels are an integral part of the solution-seeking process with school personnel. District leaders can take on the role as facilitator of the process whereby family members are developing their own proactive and restorative solutions to student academic and/or behavioral problems.

And last, district leaders can make a commitment to sufficient personnel who provide guidance and counseling services to fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade students and their families. This commitment would ensure that other resources are made available to handle administrative tasks such as testing and scheduling duties. The commitment to the counseling services would ensure close working relationships with community agencies and businesses and provide career guidance or transition-to-work services that help fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade students engage in the school's learning environment.

*What Can Principals and Teachers Do?*

Principals and teacher leaders should note that grade 4 through grade 9 are pivotal years for students, that school personnel can help students to re-engage in schooling and that their efforts matter. Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, et al. suggested that school-based interventions emphasizing school completion should promote the mental health and well-being of students based on their individual differences. In spite of behavioral disengagement, the risk that a student may drop out increases when they experience disconnectedness in multiple areas of school life (2009).

Principals can create a results-oriented school culture using the process of a professional learning community (PLC). In this culture, meeting the social-emotional needs of grade 4, grade 7, and grade 9 students would have a strategic focus and a high level of monitoring by school personnel. A priority might be that the principal and school personnel create a student-centered learning environment that encourages fourth, seventh and ninth grade students to persist. Practices would ensure that every adult makes a personal connection with these students through classes and school activities. It

is recommended that principals implement the *Check and Connect* program as an intervention for students at these grade levels who demonstrate disengaging academic and/or behavior in the classrooms. Using *off-track* indicators can connect these students with someone who facilitates academic support, problem-solving strategies, and community services.

Fourth, seventh, and ninth grade teachers should know that implementing instructional and assessment strategies that help students learn and classroom management strategies that help students participate in an appropriate manner are as important as the content they teach. Teachers should communicate to these students high but fair expectations. Principals can seek out and provide professional development for fourth, seventh, and ninth grade teachers that involve strategies to ensure that well-structured and caring learning environments are established. Teachers would be trained in a way that would increase their efficacy to implement classroom management strategies that teach fourth, seventh, and ninth grade students how to take responsibility for their own success, engage in strategies that develop a meaningful caring community, provide opportunities for meaningful participation, and set clear and consistent expectations of students' behaviors and academic goals. Teachers can be provided mastery experiences that use an instructional strategy that promotes cooperative learning and connects the content to transferable life skills.

#### Limitations

There were only a small number of limitations that impacted this study. The scope of the study was to determine if a significant relationship existed between teacher-efficacy perceptions of math and English Language Arts teachers at the fourth, seventh and ninth grade levels and the perceptions of their efforts to re-engage students to persist

to graduate on time in one Louisiana school district. The findings presented here may not be applicable or generalized to other school or district settings. The population of teachers surveyed in this study was restricted to fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and English Language Arts teachers. While the overall sample size of the teachers in the study was sufficient, a small sample of teachers from each teaching assignment responded to the questionnaires. Larger sample sizes from each teaching assignment might produce significantly different results. The means of data collection may have also limited the findings of this study. While questionnaires provided a rich source of data for each of the variables study, a qualitative design may have provided additional insight into the teacher's perceptions.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Although there is an abundance of research regarding teacher efficacy and its various applications, this researcher found limited studies on teacher efficacy beliefs as related to teachers' perceptions of helping students re-engage in learning so that the student graduates on time. Teacher efficacy is so influential to the academic success of the student. It stands to reason that given the current political climate regarding public education and accountability, there is much room for additional research in this area.

While there existed fairly highly correlations for teacher efficacy subscales and teachers' perceptions of re-engaging students both academically and/or behaviorally, these correlations were not significant due to the sample size of the subgroups. Studies involving larger samples from each grade level and each teaching assignment (minimum 25-30), smaller districts, and/or students with various demographics—such as high poverty—would certainly add to the findings of this study and to the literature as well.



Qualitative studies, using the *Teachers' Sense of Effectiveness for Re-engaging Students* instrument, would provide a richer understanding of the perspective of fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade math and ELA teachers to help students with academic and/or behavioral signs of disengagement. Additional studies involving the perspectives of principals and district leaders' efforts to increase teacher efficacy so that students graduate on time might add clarity to the complex job that teachers have in teaching all students at high levels.

Furthermore, additional studies are necessary in order to understand better how to provide meaningful professional development that increases teacher efficacy for various capabilities. Professional training that increases teachers' capabilities in using early warning system data to identify and monitor at-risk students, in providing behavioral and academic interventions, and/or in developing important relationships with students so that resiliency increases would deepen our understanding the best practices in serving at-risk youth.

### Summary

Choosing to drop out of school is a serious problem and the consequences can have lasting affects for both the student and for our society. Over the years, there have been a variety of ways the student dropout has been counted. Current accountability methods bring clarity to the dropout crisis by holding schools accountable for those who graduate. We now know that students who drop out disengage from school life in very observable ways—exhibiting habitual discipline infractions, failing grades in courses such as math and English Language Arts, and demonstrating poor attendance to school. School personnel have the ability to identify students early based on these high yield indicators.

When student engagement is low, as evidenced by the student's behavioral and academic experiences, teachers must intervene in a way that helps the student re-engage in the learning process. When working with students at risk of dropping out, it is important that teachers and school leaders develop a common understanding of what student engagement is and its relationship to student progress towards graduation. Building on the nearly forty years of research on teacher efficacy and student engagement, this study hypothesized that even before or in conjunction with early identification of at-risk students, teachers' perceptions of their ability to intervene and how it aligns with this eventual outcome must be taken into consideration. This research study focused on teachers' perception of self-efficacy and their perceptions of how to re-engage at-risk students so that they graduate on time.

The literature review and findings from this study emphasize the importance of understanding the dropout crisis in terms of disengagement, identifying students who are disengaged, developing relationships with students that promote resiliency, implementing strategies to re-engage students in school, and providing continuous professional development to increase teacher efficacy in working with at-risk youth is our best chance of helping students graduate on time. The results from this study show that, although fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade teachers perceive themselves as highly efficacious when it comes to the teaching expectations for students in general, their efficacy decreases when given a specific student with specific academic and behavioral signs of disengagement.

The information gained from this study should be helpful in program implementation that assists students to persist on the path to graduating on time. It is

anticipated that the information gained will add to the current literature on educational leadership regarding at-risk students. Information should prove useful to school districts in developing a systemic district plan that outlines steps for early identification of student disengagement and interventions that assist students' persistence to graduation. This proposed district plan would not only include practices that accurately identify students early and provide interventions at appropriate grade levels, but would also include professional development that will assist in increasing teacher efficacy for implementing interventions. "Unless school personnel clearly understand the problems they are trying to solve, they cannot develop meaningful, measurable outcomes" (Baker Evaluation, Research, and Consulting, Inc., p. 11).

## APPENDIX A

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

There are three instruments for this study. The first part asks you to complete the questionnaire titled *Demographic Questionnaire*. The second part asks you to complete the questionnaire titled *Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (short form)*. It has twelve questions regarding your experience in your classroom with your students. The last part, *Teachers' Sense of Effectiveness for Re-engaging Students*, includes two student vignettes and asks you to answer questions after reading each vignette. Please complete all parts in the order given. **You are to indicate your answers on the questionnaires provided.**

1. What is your gender?  
(1) Male      (2) Female
  
2. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, mark the previous highest degree received.  
(1) Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, AB, BS)  
(2) Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)  
(3) Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD)
  
3. What is your teaching experience in total years completed?  
(a) 0 – 3 years                      (c) 11 – 20 years      (e) more than 30 years  
(b) 4 – 10 years                      (d) 21 – 30 years
  
4. What is your teaching experience in total years at your current school?  
(a) 0 – 3 years                      (c) 11 – 20 years      (e) more than 30 years  
(b) 4 – 10 years                      (d) 21 – 30 years
  
5. Which statement best describes your teaching assignment?  
(a) Fourth grade math    (b) Fourth grade ELA      (c) Fourth grade math & ELA  
  
(d) Seventh grade math    (e) Seventh grade ELA      (f) Seventh grade math & ELA  
  
(g) Ninth grade math      (h) Ninth grade ELA      (i) Ninth grade math & ELA
  
6. I am considered a  
(a) Regular Education Teacher  
(b) Gifted Education Teacher  
(c) Special Education Teacher

## APPENDIX B

## TEACHERS' SENSE OF EFFICACY SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE

**Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale<sup>1</sup> (short form)**

<b>Teacher Beliefs</b>		<b>How much can you do?</b>								
Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.		Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1.	How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2.	How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3.	How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
4.	How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5.	To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6.	How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7.	How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8.	How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9.	How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10.	To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11.	How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12.	How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

## APPENDIX C

## TEACHERS' SENSE OF EFFECTIVENESS FOR RE-ENGAGING STUDENTS

The following vignettes represent students who, while previously enrolled in the district, are each in their first year at your school. After examining the students' history on attendance, discipline, and academics, it is noticed that data is only available for the previous three school years. Please read both vignettes and respond to the questions that follow each one.

## Vignette 1

The first discipline infraction appearing on Paul's record was from three years ago when he was sent to the office for being "constantly out of his seat." A similar pattern of disobedient behavior continued throughout the school year. This behavior included acting up in detention, going down the hallway after being told not to, and not following directions from the bus driver.

Not much improvement occurred in Paul's behavior the next year. He was disciplined four times for fighting and several times for disruptive classroom behavior, which included hitting another student and "horse playing." By midway through the school year, Paul's attendance declined. An "Attendance" letter was sent home indicating that he was over the limit of allowed absences for a given school year.

Although he has maintained passing grades in all of his classes, in the previous three years of school, Paul had 36 recorded discipline infractions. Seven of these situations involved conduct or habits that were injurious to other students. Other offenses during this time included excessive tardies to school and to class.

1. How effective would you be in designing experiences for this student in your class that would lead him to be engaged in learning?
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
extremely ineffective			moderately effective			extremely effective
  
2. How effective would you be in helping this student maintain good attendance to school?
 

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
extremely ineffective			moderately effective			extremely effective

3. How effective would you be in helping this student increase his academic achievement in school?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
4. How effective would you be in designing activities to match the individual interests and abilities of this student?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
5. How effective would you be in persuading this student that he can be successful in school?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
6. How effective would you be in providing intensive academic interventions necessary to help this student learn?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
7. How effective would you be in providing intensive behavior interventions necessary to help this student reduce his overall behavior problems?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
8. How effective would you be in involving this student's family in decisions that help him to persist in school?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
9. How likely will this student be to graduate on time with his peers based on your efforts?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |

## Vignette 2

The first report of a failing grade appearing on Steve's record was from three years ago where he made an F in one of his courses. Throughout the school year, Steve did not turn in homework assignments and scored low on teacher-made assessments. Later in the same school year, he was disciplined for throwing toilet paper all over the student restroom.

Not much improvement occurred in Steve's academics the next year. Reports were made to the school counselor and administrator about Steve's repeated attempts to sleep in class. By midway through the school year, his attendance declined. An "Attendance" letter was sent home indicating that he was over the limit of allowed absences for a given school year.

In the previous three years of school, Steve has failed a total of six subjects. It was determined that Steve has academic deficiencies that equate to two academic years behind those of his peers. Both math and English Language Arts are among the courses he has failed. This past year he was in danger of being retained. While Steve has very few discipline infractions, his record includes offenses during this time for excessive tardies to school and to class.

10. How effective would you be in designing experiences for this student in your class that would lead him to be engaged in learning?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
extremely ineffective			moderately effective			extremely effective

11. How effective would you be in helping this student maintain good school attendance?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
extremely ineffective			moderately effective			extremely effective

12. How effective would you be in helping this student increase his academic achievement in school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
extremely ineffective			moderately effective			extremely effective



13. How effective would you be in designing activities to match the individual interests and abilities of this student?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
14. How effective would you be in persuading this student that he can be successful in school?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
15. How effective would you be in providing intensive academic interventions necessary to help this student learn?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
16. How effective would you be in providing intensive behavior interventions necessary to help this student reduce his overall behavior problems?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
17. How effective would you be in involving this student's family in decisions that help him to persist in school?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |
18. How likely will this student be to graduate on time with his peers based on your efforts?
- |                          |   |   |                         |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                       | 5 | 6 | 7                      |
| extremely<br>ineffective |   |   | moderately<br>effective |   |   | extremely<br>effective |

APPENDIX D  
PERMISSION LETTER



**ANITA WOOLFOLK HOY, Ph.D.**

**PROFESSOR  
PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION**

Dear

You have my permission to use the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* in your research. A copy of both the long and short forms of the instrument as well as scoring instructions can be found at:

<http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy/researchinstruments.htm>

Best wishes in your work,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Anita Woolfolk Hoy'.

Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D.  
Professor

## APPENDIX E

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL


**THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI**

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

**NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

**PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11102404**
**PROJECT TITLE: Is There a Correlation Between Teacher Efficacy and Effectiveness to Re-Engage At-Risk Students and Graduate on Time?**
**PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation**
**RESEARCHER/S: John D. Guillory**
**COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology**
**DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership & School Counseling**
**FUNDING AGENCY: N/A**
**IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Approval**
**PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: 11/01/2011 to 11/02/2012**

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.  
Institutional Review Board Chair

## APPENDIX F

## SUPERINTENDENT LETTER



Superintendent

District

Board Members



October 5, 2011

Dear Superintendent Folse:

I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program at The University of Southern Mississippi. I have completed my course work and will be conducting the research project associated with my dissertation in the near future. This research project will focus on teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy and their perceptions of helping at-risk students graduate on time. It is hoped that the information gained from this study will add to the current literature on educational leadership regarding at-risk students and be helpful in program implementation for schools that specifically assist students to persist in a manner that keeps them on the path to graduating on time.

The variables to be studied will be teacher efficacy of math and English Language Arts teachers at the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade levels and perceptions of their efforts to re-engage students to persist towards graduation. I am requesting to use your schools with the appropriate grade level configurations during the 2011-2012 school year in my research project. I would appreciate your assistance in my quest to complete this project.

During the data collection process, I will be asking principals of the appropriate schools to give questionnaire packets to their teachers who teach math or English Language Arts at either the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, or 9<sup>th</sup> grade levels. Teachers of these grade levels and subject areas will be invited to participate in the study by completing three questionnaires. Participant's responses will be kept confidential and I will not use any school identifying information, such as names, in the data analysis. At no time will any party other than my committee members be allowed access to the data collected during this process. I am requesting permission to conduct the study and begin the process by providing building principals information that explains the process of distributing and returning the questionnaires.

Once the dissertation is complete, I will be more than happy to share the findings of this research project with anyone in your district. I truly appreciate your time and assistance in this educational venture. If you choose to grant me permission to use teacher questionnaire answers in this project, please sign below. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email or phone.

Thank you,

John D. (Danny) Guillory  
985-502-0779 (cell)

By signing and returning this form, I am granting Mr. Danny Guillory permission to conduct the research study with appropriate schools. I understand that Mr. Guillory will contact each building principal and request that they pass out a questionnaire packet to each math or English Language Arts teacher at either the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade level during the 2011-2012 school year.



Superintendent /



## APPENDIX G

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Principal,

As a school with grades \_\_\_\_\_, your school has been selected to participate in a research study that will explore teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy and their perceptions of how to re-engage at-risk students so they graduate on time. On October 5, 2011, the Superintendent granted permission for me to discuss with you your school's involvement in this research study. The participation of your school's teachers in this research study is strictly voluntarily and information is provided below to help you make an informed decision. The University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) is responsible for ensuring that adequate safeguards are in place to minimize the risk to individuals involved in such studies, as such, you are asked to sign this informed consent form if you agree to participate. Please note that in the event you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

This study is being conducted in fulfillment of the requirements of the doctoral program in the Department of Educational Leadership and School Counseling at The University of Southern Mississippi located in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Participation is completely voluntary and may be discontinued at any time without penalty. **By signing this consent form you are indicating your consent to distribute questionnaire packets to your certified math and English Language Arts teachers who teach fourth grade, seventh grade, or ninth grade students.** All data collected during this study will remain anonymous, and any personal information inadvertently gained will be kept confidential.

Teacher benefits of this study include valuable information pertinent to professional development and a greater understanding of teacher efficacy as related to helping students graduate on time. Furthermore, results of this study may enable you as the school leader to make informed decisions regarding the engagement of at-risk students. It is anticipated that the information gained from this study will add to the current literature on educational leadership regarding at-risk students and be helpful in program implementation that assists students to persist on the path to graduating on time.

There are minimal risks associated with this study, such as breach of confidentiality and discomfort in sharing personal information. Teachers only need to respond to those questions that they are comfortable answering. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board at The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS, 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

The questionnaires included in your packet should take teachers no longer than 20 minutes to complete. **To ensure teacher responses are anonymous, teachers can send their completed questionnaires using the pre-labeled envelope. I am asking that you or a designee return all questionnaires from your teachers using the one manila clasp envelope provided for your school.** Should you have any questions regarding this

study, please contact John “Danny” Guillory at 985.502.0779 or by email at [danny.guillory@stpsb.org](mailto:danny.guillory@stpsb.org).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

John (Danny) Guillory  
Program Coordinator

By signing and returning this form, I am granting permission for my school’s participation in the study. I also agree to distribute questionnaires to certified math or English Language Arts teacher who meet the minimum age requirement of 18 and who teach fourth grade, seventh grade, or ninth grade students. I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and may be discontinued at anytime.

---

Signature of the Research Participant

Date

## APPENDIX H

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Teacher,

As a math or English Language Arts teacher, you are being asked to participate in a research study that will explore teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy and of how to re-engage at-risk students so they graduate on time. Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntarily and information is provided below to help you make an informed decision. The University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) is responsible for ensuring that adequate safeguards are in place to minimize the risk to individuals involved in such studies, as such, you are asked to sign this informed consent form if you agree to participate. Please note that in the event you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

This study is being conducted in fulfillment of the requirements of the doctoral program in the Department of Educational Leadership and School Counseling at The University of Southern Mississippi located in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Participation is completely voluntary and may be discontinued at any time without penalty. **By signing this consent form, and completing and returning the attached questionnaires, you are indicating your consent to participate in this study and acknowledge that you meet the minimum age requirement of 18.** All data will remain anonymous, and any personal information inadvertently gained will be kept confidential.

Individual benefits of this study include valuable information pertinent to your own professional development and a greater understanding of teacher efficacy as related to helping re-engage at-risk students in the learning process. It is anticipated that the information gained from this study will add to the current literature on educational leadership regarding at-risk students and be helpful in program implementation that assists students to persist on the path to graduating on time.

There are minimal risks associated with this study, such as breach of confidentiality and discomfort in sharing personal information. Please feel free to respond to only those questions that you are comfortable answering. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board at The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS, 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

The attached questionnaires should not take longer than 20 minutes to complete. **To keep your responses anonymous, a white adhesive seal envelope is included for you to return your completed questionnaires. Place your envelope, with your questionnaires included, into the manila clasp envelope provided for your school. Please do not include your consent letter in the white envelope but instead place it in the manila school envelope. The principal or designee will return the manila envelope including all questionnaires to me.** Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact John "Danny" Guillory at 985.502.0779 or by email at [danny.guillory@stpsb.org](mailto:danny.guillory@stpsb.org).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

John (Danny) Guillory  
Program Coordinator

By signing and returning this form, I am granting permission for the researcher to use my responses for the research study described above. I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and may be discontinued at anytime. In addition, I meet the minimum age requirement of 18 years of age for participation in this study.

---

Signature of the Research Participant

Date



## REFERENCES

- Allensworth, E. M., & Easton, J. Q. (2005). *The on-track indicator as a predictor of high school graduation*. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research.  
Retrieved December 19, 2010 from [http://www.all4ed.org/files/Louisiana\\_grp.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/Louisiana_grp.pdf)  
[http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/content/publications.php?pub\\_id=10](http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/content/publications.php?pub_id=10)
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2009a). *Federal high school graduation rate policies and the impact on Louisiana*. Retrieved July 8, 2010 from  
[http://www.all4ed.org/files/Louisiana\\_grp.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/Louisiana_grp.pdf)
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2009b). *The graduation promise act (GPA): A one page summary*. Retrieved July 8, 2010 from [http://www.all4ed.org/files/GPAone\\_pager.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/GPAone_pager.pdf)
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2009c). *Understanding high school graduation rates in Louisiana*. Retrieved July 8, 2010 from  
[http://www.all4ed.org/publication\\_material/fact\\_sheets](http://www.all4ed.org/publication_material/fact_sheets)
- Anderson, A. R., Christenson, S. L., Sinclair, M. F., & Lehr, C. A. (2004). Check & Connect : The importance of relationships for promoting engagement with school. *Journal of School Psychology, 42*, 95-113. Retrieved April 10, 2011 from  
<http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Ann E. Casey Foundation. (n.d.). *Kids count data center. Re: Public high school dropouts*. Retrieved December 5, 2010 from  
<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate/Rankings.aspx?state=LA&ind=1502>
- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct.

*Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 369-386. Retrieved July 10, 2011 from [http://www.all4ed.org/files/GPAone pager.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/GPAone%20pager.pdf)

Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., Kim, D., & Reschly, A. L. (2006). Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement: Validation of the student engagement instrument. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44(5), 427-445. Retrieved June 28, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Archambault, I., Janosz, M., Fallu, J., & Pagani, L. S. (2009). Student engagement and its relationship with early high school dropout. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32, 651-670. Retrieved April 28, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Archambault, I., Janosz, M., Morizot, J., & Pagani, L. (2009). Adolescent behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement in school: Relationship to dropout. *Journal of School Health*, 79(9), 408-415. Retrieved April 28, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Baker Evaluation, Research, and Consulting, Inc. (The BERC Group). (n.d.). *Reinvesting in youth. Dropout prevention planning guidebook*. Retrieved August 28, 2010 from <http://www.psesd.org/images/stories/LandT/riy/finalguidebook-tool.6.30.08.pdf>

Baker, P. H. (Summer 2005). Managing student behavior: How ready are teachers to meet the challenge? *American Secondary Education*, 33(3), 51-64. Retrieved April 25, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Balfanz, R., Herzog, L., & Mac Iver, D. J. (2007). Preventing student disengagement and keeping students on the graduation path in urban middle-grades schools: Early

- identification and effective interventions. *Educational Psychologist*, 42(4), 223-235. Retrieved June 24, 2010 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Balfanz, R., Horning, J., Bridgeland, J. M., & McNaught, M. (2009). *Grad Nation: A guidebook to help communities tackle the dropout crisis*. Retrieved September 12, 2010 from America's Promise Alliance at <http://www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Dropout-Prevention.aspx>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215. Retrieved April 4, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, 37(2), 122-147. Retrieved April 6, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44(9), 1175-1184. Retrieved April 4, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Bandura, A. (1993). Self perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(2), 117-148 Retrieved April 6, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman.

- Barton, P. E. (2005). *One-third of a nation: Rising dropout rates and declining opportunities*. (Report No. PIC-ONETHIRD). Retrieved January 14, 2011 from <http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICONETHIRD.pdf>
- Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio, J. J., & Balfanz, R. (2009). *On the front lines. Perspectives of teachers and principals on the high school dropout problem*. Civic Enterprises. Retrieved August 12, 2010 from <http://www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/frontlines.pdf>
- Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio, J.J., & Morison, K. B. (2006). *The silent epidemic. Perspectives of high school dropouts*. Civic Enterprises. Retrieved September 29, 2010 from <http://www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/thesilentepidemic3-06.pd>.
- Bridges, M., Brauckmann, S., Medina, O., Mireles, L., Spain, A., & Fuller, B. (2008). *Giving a student voice to California's dropout crisis*. (Report #8). Retrieved May 12, 2011 from California Dropout Research Project website: <http://cdrp.ucsb.edu>
- Cataldi, E. F., Laird, J., & KewalRamani, A. (2009). *High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States:2007* (NCES 2009-064). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U. S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved June 24, 2010 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009064>
- Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2007, January). *Believing and achieving* (Issue Brief). Washington, DC: Craig D. Jerald. Retrieved February 5, 2011 from [www.centerforcsri.org](http://www.centerforcsri.org)

- Choudhury, A. (2009a). Statistical correlation. Retrieved September 2, 2011 from Experiment Resources: <http://www.experiment-resources.com/statistical-correlation.html>
- Choudhury, A. (2009b). Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Retrieved September 2, 2011 from Experiment Resources: <http://www.experiment-resources.com/pearson-product-moment-correlation.html>
- Christle, C. A., Jolivette, K., & Nelson, C. M. (2007). School characteristics related to high school dropout rates. *Remedial and Special Education, 28*(6), 325-339. Retrieved June 18, 2010 from <http://www.lexisnexus.com lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Collier, M. D. (2005). An ethic of caring: The fuel for high teacher efficacy. *The Urban Review, 37*(4), 351-359. Retrieved May 5, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexus.com lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Curran, B. & Reyna, R. (2009). *Implementing graduation counts: State progress to date, 2009*. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. Retrieved February 22, 2011 from <http://www.nga.org>
- Deemer, S. A. (2004). Classroom goal orientation in high school classrooms: Revealing links between teacher beliefs and classroom environments. *Educational Research, 46*(1), 73-90. Retrieved April 25, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexus.com lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Deflem, M. (1998). *An introduction to research design*. [Unpublished notes]. Retrieved September 2, 2011 from [www.mathieudeflem.net](http://www.mathieudeflem.net).

- Dillon, S. (2011, September 22). Obama to waive parts of No Child Left Behind. *The New York Times*. Retrieved September 30, 2011 from [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/education/23educ.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/education/23educ.html?_r=1)
- Downey, J.A. (2008). Recommendations for fostering educational resilience in the classroom. *Preventing School Failure*, 53(1), 56-64. Retrieved August 5, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Duchense, S., Vitaro, F., Larose, S., & Tremblay, R. E. (2008). Trajectories of anxiety during elementary-school years and the prediction of high school noncompletion. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 37, 1134-1146. Retrieved August 20, 2010 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Dufour, R. & Marzano, R. J. (2011). *Leaders of learning: How district, schools, and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Dynarski, M., Clarke, L., Cobb, B., Finn, J., Rumberger, R., & Smink, J. (2008). *Dropout prevention: A practice guide* (NCEE 2008-4025). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Research Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved June 18, 2010 from <http://ies.ed.gov/mcee/wwc>
- Earvolino-Ramirez, M. (2007). Resilience: A concept analysis. *Nursing Forum*, 42 (2), 73-82, DOI: 10.1111/j.1744-6198.2007.00070. Retrieved July 24, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

- Education Week (2011, June 7). *National graduation rate rebounds; 1.2 million students still fail to earn diplomas* [Press release]. Retrieved July 20, 2011 from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2011/06/09/index.html?intc=EW-DC11-FL1>
- Edwards, S. W., & Edwards, R. (2007). *The principal's role in dropout prevention: Seven key principles*. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center.
- Fortin, L., Marcotte, D., Potivin, P., Royer, E., & Joly, J. (2006). Typology of students at-risk of dropping out of school: Description by personal, family and school factors. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 21*(4), 363-383. Retrieved May 13, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(1), 59-109. Retrieved December 19, 2010 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 76*(4), 569-582. Retrieved April 4, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Goddard, R. D., Hoy, W. K., & Hoy, W. A. (Summer 2000). Collective teacher efficacy: Its meaning, measure, and impact on student achievement. *American Education Research Journal, 37*(2), 479-507. Retrieved May 24, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Guskey, T. R., & Passaro, P. D. (1994). Teacher efficacy: A study of construct dimensions. *American Educational Research Journal, 31*(3), 627-643. Retrieved May 20, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

- Hall, P. S., & Hall, N. D. (2003). *Educating oppositional and defiant children*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Harris, R. (2008). A phenomenographic investigation of teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 35(1), 57-79. Retrieved June 24, 2010 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Hernandez, D. J. (2011). Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation. Retrieved July 7, 2011 from <http://www.aecf.org/>
- Hixson, J. (1993). *Redefining the issues: Who's at risk and why*. Revision of a paper originally presented in 1983 at *Reducing the Risks*, a workshop presented by the Midwest Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities. Retrieved August 29, 2011 from <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/atrisk/at5def.htm>
- Hupfeld, K. (n.d.). A review of the literature. Resiliency skills and dropout prevention. ScholarCentric. Denver, CO. Retrieved December 18, 2010 from <http://www.scholarcentric.com/index.html>
- Janosz, M., Archambault, I., Morizot, J., & Pagani, L. S. (2008). School engagement trajectories and their differential predictive relations to dropout. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(1), 21-40. Retrieved January 28, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>



Janosz, M., Le Blanc, M., Boulerice, B., & Tremblay, R. (2000). Predicting different types of school dropouts: A typological approach with two longitudinal samples. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 92*(1), 171-190. Retrieved January 15, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Kansas State Department of Education. (2010). *At-risk pupil assistance program guidelines*. Retrieved August 29, 2011 from <http://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zlgN8zo8ek4%3d&tabid=289&mid=8369>

Kemp, S. E. (2006). Dropout policies and trends for students with and without disabilities. *Adolescence, 41*(162), 235-250. Retrieved June 24, 2010 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Kennelly, L., & Monrad, M. (2007). *Approaches to dropout prevention: Heeding early warning signs with appropriate interventions*. Retrieved June 24, 2010 from National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research website: [http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/ews/\\_guide.asp](http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/ews/_guide.asp)

Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 262-273. Retrieved May 4, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Knesting, K. (2008). Students at-risk for dropout: Supporting their persistence. *Preventing School Failure, 52*(4), 3-10. Retrieved June 24, 2010 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

- Knesting, K., & Waldron, N. (2006). Willing to play the game: How at-risk students persist in school. *Psychology in the Schools, 43*(5), 599-611. Retrieved November 2, 2010 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Langenkamp, A. G. (2010). Academic vulnerability and resilience during the transition to high school: The role of social relationships and district context. *Sociology of Education, 83*(1), 1-19. DOI: 10.1177/0038040709356563. Retrieved July 28, 2011 from <http://soe.sagepub.com>
- Libbey, H. P. (2004). Measuring student relationships to school: Attachment, bonding, connectedness, and engagement. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 274-283. Retrieved April 7, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Liljequist, L., & Renk, K. (2007). The relationships among teachers' perceptions of student behavior, teachers' characteristics, and ratings of students' emotional and behavioral problems. *Educational Psychology, 27*(4), 557-571. Retrieved May 27, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Lloyd, S. C. (2007). What it takes to graduate for the class of 2007. Retrieved January 7, 2011 from <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2007/40policy-1.pdf>
- Lopes, J. A., Monteiro I., Sil, V., Rutherford, R. B., & Quinn, M. M. (2004). Teachers' perceptions about teaching problem students in regular classrooms. *Education and treatment of children, 27*(4), 394-419. Retrieved April 25, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Louisiana Department of Education (n.d.). *Common Core Assessments*. Retrieved February 2, 2012 from [http://www.louisianaschools.net/topics/common\\_core\\_assessments.html](http://www.louisianaschools.net/topics/common_core_assessments.html)

- Louisiana Department of Education (2007). *Executive Summary 2006-2007 Louisiana State Education Progress Report*, 21. Retrieved July 10, 2010 from [http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/pair/statereport0607/06-executive\\_summary.pdf](http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/pair/statereport0607/06-executive_summary.pdf)
- Louisiana Department of Education (2008). *2007-2008 Louisiana State Education Progress Report*. Retrieved July 10, 2010 from <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/14235.pdf>
- Louisiana Department of Education (2010). *Louisiana and partnering state awarded Race to the Top assessment grant*. Retrieved February 2, 2012 from [http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/publicaffairs/press\\_release.aspx?PR=1458](http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/publicaffairs/press_release.aspx?PR=1458)
- Louisiana School-to-Prison Reform Coalition (2009). *Effective discipline for student success: Reducing students and teacher dropout rates in Louisiana*. Retrieved November 19, 2010 from <http://www.laptic.org/resources/Reducing-Student-and-Teacher-Dropout-Rates-in-LA.pdf>
- LPB Louisiana Public Square (2009). *Louisiana's dropout problem*. Retrieved July 10, 2010 from <http://www.lpb.org/programs/LApublicsquare/LPSbackgrounderMar2009.pdf>
- Matthews, M. S. (2006). Gifted students dropping out: Recent findings from a southeastern state. *Roeper Review*, 28(4), 216-223. Retrieved July 19, 2011 from <http://p2048-lynx.lib.usm.edu/logon.lynx.lib.usm.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=21934696&site=ehost-live>

- Milliken, B. (2007). *The last dropout: Stop the epidemic!* Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc.
- Munthe, E., & Thuen, E. (2009). Lower secondary school teachers' judgments of pupil problems. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 15(5), 563-578.  
Retrieved May 30, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- National Center for School Engagement - NCSE (2010). Retrieved December 5, 2010 from <http://www.schoolengagement.org/index.cfm/NCSE%20Approach>
- National Governors Association, Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers (2010). *Common Core State Standards*. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington D.C.. Retrieved January 10, 2012 from <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>
- National High School Center (2007). *Dropout prevention for students with disabilities: A critical issue for state education agencies*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved May 28, 2011 from [http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC\\_Dropout\\_Prevention\\_052507.pdf](http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_Dropout_Prevention_052507.pdf)
- Nunn, G. D., & Jantz, P. B. (2009). Factors within Response to Intervention implementation training associated with teacher efficacy beliefs. *Education*, 129(4), 599-607. Retrieved May 29, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Nunn, G. D., Jantz, P. B., & Butikofer, C. (2009). Concurrent validity between teacher efficacy and perceptions of Response to Intervention outcomes. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 36(3), 215-218. Retrieved May 29, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

- Obama, B. 2010, March 1. President Obama announces steps to reduce dropout rate and prepare students for college and careers (The White House – Office of the press secretary). Retrieved September 15, 2010 from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/president-obama-announces-steps-reduce-dropout-rate-and-prepare-students-college-an>
- Obama, B. 2011, September 23. Remarks by the President on No Child Left Behind flexibility (The White House – Office of the press secretary). Retrieved September 30, 2011 from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/23/remarks-president-no-child-left-behind-flexibility>
- Oswald, M., Johnson, B., & Howard, S. (2003). Quantifying and evaluating resilience promoting factors. Teachers' beliefs and perceived roles. *Research in Education*, Issue 70, 50-64. Retrieved May 12, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Pas, E. T., Bradshaw, C. P., Hershfeldt, P. A., & Leaf, P. J. (2010). A multilevel exploration of the influence of teacher efficacy and burnout on response to student problem behavior and school-based service use. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 25(1), 13-27. Retrieved May 14, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning (2008). *Louisiana Dropout Profile*. Retrieved July 23, 2010 from <http://picardcenter.org/ResearchAreas/education/dropoutcrisis/Documents/LouisianaState.pdf>

- Pinkus, L. (2008). *Using early-warning data to improve graduation rates: Closing cracks in the education system* (Policy Brief). Retrieved June 14, 2010 from Alliance for Excellent Education website: <http://www.all4ed.org/files/EWI.pdf>
- Planty, M., Hussar, W., Snyder, T., Provasnik, S., Kena, G., Dinkes, R., KewalRamani, A., & Kemp, J. (2008). *The Condition of Education 2008* (NCES 2008-031). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved December 1, 2010 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005094>
- Princiotta, D., & Reyna, R. (2009). *Achieving graduation for all. A governor's guide to dropout prevention and recovery*. National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices. Retrieved February 22, 2011 from <http://www.americaspromise.org/~media/Files/Resources/0910ACHIEVINGGRADUATION.ashx>
- Ransford, C. R., Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C. E., Small, M., & Jacobson, L. (2009). The role of teachers' psychological experiences and perceptions of curriculum supports on the implementation of a social and emotional learning curriculum. *School Psychology Review*, 38(4), 510-532. Retrieved June 6, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Reeves, D. B. (2000a). The 90/90/90 Schools: A Case Study. In C. Barnes & A. Schumacher (Eds.), *Accountability in action: A blueprint for learning* (pp. 185-196). Retrieved August 4, 2011 from <http://www.leadandlearn.com/multimedia-resource-center/articles>

- Reeves, D. B. (2000b). Three keys to professional development. Retrieved from The Leadership and Learning Center website on December 29, 2011 at <http://www.leadandlearn.com/multimedia-resource-center/articles>
- Reeves, D. B. (2011a). Behind the numbers. *American School Board Journal*, 198(7), 40-44. Retrieved December 29, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Reeves, D. B. (2011b). Fact or fiction. *American School Board Journal*, 198(1), 40-41. Retrieved December 29, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Reeves, D. B. (2011c). *Finding your leadership focus. What matters most for student results*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Reeves, D. B. (2011d). Getting ready for common core. *American School Board Journal*, 198(3), 23-24. Retrieved December 29, 2011 from <http://www.leadandlearn.com/multimedia-resource-center/articles/standards>
- Reschly, A. L., Huebner, E. S., Appleton, J. J., & Antaramian, S. (2008). Engagement as flourishing: The contribution of positive emotions and coping to adolescents' engagement at school and with learning. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 419-431. Retrieved April 24, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Ross, J., & Bruce, C. (2007). Professional development effects on teacher efficacy: Results of randomized field trial. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 101(1), 50-60. Retrieved June 2, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Schlechty, P. C. (2011). *Engaging students: The next level of working on the work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Schunk, D. H. (1991). Self-efficacy and academic motivation. *Educational Psychologist*, 26, 207-231. Retrieved May 12, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Shidler, L. (2008). The impact of time spent coaching for teacher efficacy on student achievement. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36, 453-460. Retrieved May 12, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Shore, R., & Shore, B. (2009). KIDS COUNT indicator brief. *Reducing the high school dropout rate*. Retrieved September 15, 2010 from Ann E. Casey Foundation website <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid=%7B3DE81D1E-A011-4B6E-91E5-D62D8907BC29%7D>
- Shuttleworth, M. (2008). Descriptive Research Design. Retrieved September 2, 2011 from Experiment Resources: <http://www.experiment-resources.com/descriptive-research-design.html>
- Silver, D., Saunders, M., & Zarate, E. (2008). *What factors predict high school graduation in the Los Angeles Unified School District* (Report #14). Retrieved June 14, 2010 from California Dropout Research Project website: <http://cdrp.ucsb.edu>
- Smith, N. J. (2006). *Implementing the NGA graduation rate compact: State-level issues*. Retrieved November 2, 2010 from [http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/Publications/Implementing\\_the\\_NGA\\_Graduation\\_Rate\\_Compact\\_State-level\\_Issues.pdf](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/Publications/Implementing_the_NGA_Graduation_Rate_Compact_State-level_Issues.pdf)



- Steinberg, A., Johnson, C., & Pennington, H. (2006). *Addressing America's dropout challenge. State efforts to boost graduation rates require federal support.* Retrieved May 22, 2010 from Center for American Progress website:  
<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/11/graduation.html>
- Stillwell, R. (2010). *Public school graduates and dropouts from the common core of data: School Year 2007–08* (NCES 2010-341). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved from November 2, 2010 from  
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010313.pdf>
- Suh, S., Suh, J., & Houton, I. (2007). Predictors of categorical at-risk high school dropouts. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 85*, 196-203. Retrieved June 24, 2010 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Therriault, S. B., Heppen, J., O'Cummings, M., Fryer, L., & Johnson, A. (2010). *Early warning system implementation guide.* Retrieved on April 24, 2011 from National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research website:  
<http://betterhighschools.org/ews.asp>
- Tschannen-Moran, M., Woolfolk Hoy, A., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure. *Review of Educational Research, 68*, 202-248. Retrieved April 4, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Tsouloupas, C. N., Carson, R. L., Matthews, R., Grawitch, M. J., & Barber, L. K. (2010). Exploring the association between teachers' perceived student misbehavior and emotional exhaustion: The importance of teacher efficacy beliefs and regulation.

*Educational Psychology*, 30(2), 173-189. Retrieved May 7, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Tucker C. M., Porter, T., Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., Ivery, P. D., Mack, C. E., & Jackson, E. S. (2005). Promoting teacher efficacy for working with culturally diverse students. *Preventing School Failure*, 50(1), 29-34. Retrieved May 27, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

U.S. Department of Education. (2011). *ESEA Flexibility*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved September 30, 2011 from <http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility>

U.S. Department of Education, ESEA Flexibility Overview. (2011). Retrieved September 30, 2011 from <http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility>

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2005). *The Condition of Education 2005* (NCES 2005-094). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved December 1, 2010 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005094>

Vitaro, F., Larocque, D., Janosz, M., & Tremblay, R.E. (2001). Negative social experiences and dropping out of school. *Educational Psychology*, 21(4), 401-415. Retrieved June 7, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Yeo, L. S., Ang, R. P., Chong, W. H., Huan, V. S., & Quek, C. L. (2008). Teacher efficacy in the context of teaching low achieving students. *Current Psychology*, 27(3), 192-204. Retrieved January 15, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Yilmaz, C. (2011). Teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy, English proficiency, and instructional strategies. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 39(1), 91-100.

Retrieved May 27, 2011 from <http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>

Yoon, J. S. (2004). Predicting teacher interventions in bullying situations. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 27(1), 37-45. Retrieved May 27, 2011 from

<http://www.lexisnexis.com.lynx.lib.usm.edu>